

THE VIETNAM WAR
AND
ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL AFTERMATH

By
Doan Kiem Tran

PREFACE

This dissertation was part of the author's effort to complete the race with his two wonderful daughters as to who was the first to obtain a doctor's degree. Accepting this challenge, he may have forgotten Confucius's warning, *hàü sinh kháü uý*, "youngsters are to be regarded with respect;" and as a result, he was the last to arrive at the finish line. Many fathers, however, would cherish the trailing position he achieved in the competition; for in Vietnamese thinking, a family's blessings consist in the children doing better than their elders, *con hôn cha laø nhaø coü phuïc*. Congratulations on the remarkable academic success of a refugee family that has carried on a Vietnamese valuable tradition -- the love of learning.

A war victim and refugee himself, Dr. Tran Kiem Doan was in a vantage point and highly motivated in studying the impact of the Vietnam War on the psyche of the overseas Vietnamese community with a view to helping social services providers understand predicaments faced by fellow refugees. Focused in this study are guidelines recommended by the author to deal with such crucial psychological issues as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and alienation that have enormously affected Vietnamese refugees.

There is little doubt that every Vietnamese refugee was exposed to horrors of a prolonged war and high risks of their flight to freedom, and as a result most of them have suffered some level of what the psychiatrist would call PTSD. Since there is little recognition of this problem by Vietnamese, let's refer to those Americans who fought the

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war in Vietnam. A 1979 survey concluded that more Vietnam veterans have died by their own hand than in combat (58,022). In *New York Times Magazine*, 26 May 1996, Michael Norman says that “one of the worst things about Vietnam is that it killed even those who survived.” The twentieth century witnessed human sufferings of immense proportions, and the Vietnamese were among the peoples who carried the heaviest load. We know from voluminous accounts of suffering that came out of World War II that few victims ever forget the hellish horrors of war. Holocaust survivors still have nightmares, still feel set apart by their suffering. And yet, while war victims in the West were openly trying to deal with mental problems that came under various names like shell shock, battle fatigue, or combat neurosis; their Vietnamese counterparts have seemed more resilient to the impact of the war, or -- to be exact—more reticent on war-related mental problems. To be honest, this book is probably one of a single-digit number that have been published on the Vietnamese PTSD issue. According to Dr. Doan, the reason for such a scarcity of literature on the subject is that most Vietnamese simply don’t want to reveal personal weaknesses to outsiders, and much less when it comes to mental problems that many think are synonymous to insanity. Fear of losing face prevents the mentally afflicted from seeking help. In other words, Vietnamese tend to sweep mental problems under the rug, and that is why psychotherapy remains a stepchild among health care professions back in the old country. In this book, based on Vietnamese cultural legacies and values, Dr. Doan will recommend to services providers several approaches to helping Vietnamese refugees with PTSD.

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The twentieth century also saw drastic displacements of people in many parts of the world as a result of war or political persecutions. The Vietnamese were not exempt from this tragic human condition of the Ideological Age. As communists took over South Vietnam, a large portion of its population “voted by the feet,” fleeing the country for freedom, and thus became “displaced persons” or refugees in the West. Deprived of language and professional skills to make adjustments to a new society, many Vietnamese expatriates have been beset by a sense of being left out or “alone in the crowd” or, let’s use a philosophical term, alienated. In terms of recommending to services providers approaches to alleviating the sense of alienation among his fellow refugees, Dr. Doan focuses on the role of the family and the community because in his views the Vietnamese are culturally family-oriented and communally-oriented. The love of learning is another cultural asset that he attributes to individual successes in efforts to break down discriminatory obstacles to the American mainstream society. Experiences of many boat people prove that the jump they made from the boat to the books was quite a quantum leap toward success in this new society.

Other than proposing approaches to dealing with PTSD and alienation among Vietnamese refugees, this research represents a self-introspection on the part of the Vietnamese as an ethnic group in the United States. In order to define their identity in this melting pot, the Vietnamese should know what makes who they are today. In this effort, Dr. Doan harks back to the history of Vietnamese traditions, to wars against foreign aggression, to the thirty-year Vietnam War, to concentration camps, to dangers and hardships faced by refugees on high seas as

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they fled for freedom. A great deal of Vietnamese history and culture is involved in interpreting the refugee's setbacks and achievements in America. It's our hope this research will help future generations of Vietnamese, who are born and raised in America, better understand their roots and the historic exodus their forefathers were destined to participate in.

This research on the impact of the Vietnam War on Vietnamese refugees in America is one of the very few books on the subject and therefore will be appreciated by the general readership and experts in psychotherapy alike.

Trần Ngọc Cư

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Writing a story, you may need aspirations and skills of your own, but writing a dissertation you need supports from many people. As an amateur writer who switched to write research paper, I have come to realize that a dissertation is not the work of one person, but rather a collaboration.

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My wife has sustained me from the start to the finish by patiently showing encouragement and interest in my work, standing by me when I have been faint of heart.

To my daughters, Thu and Trinh. Thu and Trinh, six years ago, you challenged me to finish doctoral program at the same time with you, I accepted the race but gradually lagged behind. Thu earned her DDS degree and Trinh earned her MD degree while I was still swimming in the ocean of words and books. Both of you were winners, but I was not a loser of the race because you are my dear daughters. Your academic accomplishments have given me the emotional support and strong inspiration I needed to move forward academically while I worked full time for the government, taught part time at the college, and wrote extensively to complete the book “The Beloved City of Hue” (Published in 1997 and 1999).

Last but foremost, to my parents and parents-in-law. Without you, my venture to this world and the U.S. would have been simply impossible. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my late mother. She was a simple peasant in a small village of Vietnam, but never blind to the value of education. She taught me to be persistent in academic goal I set out to achieve, and my fond memories of her had been an aspiration throughout my years in the U.S. My dearest Mom, I am fulfilling the promise I made with you some 15 years ago before I left you for America as a “Boat People”.

“A grateful mind by owning owes not, but still pays, at once indebted and discharged” (Milton, 1667)

ABSTRACT

Title: THE IMPACT OF THE VIETNAM WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH ON THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEES' ADJUSTMENT IN THE UNITED-STATES.

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Title of Dissertation: THE IMPACT OF THE VIETNAM WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH ON THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEES' ADJUSTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES.

Scope of Study: The thirty-year Vietnam War ended in 1975. The war devastated ecological environment and tore Vietnam apart. Shortly after the end of the war, an exodus of refugees escaped their country for better life in foreign countries. Wave after wave of the Vietnamese refugees risk their life on the rough sea and cruel land to reach Western Countries, especially the United States. Although the war was formally concluded, its serious aftermath has not ended.

Findings and Conclusions: Long-term exposures to the war, repeated relocations, and facing the hardship of a new life in a new land has made the refugees more vulnerable to psychosocial fragmentation and psychological stress. The Vietnamese are struggling in silence with the problems of identity crisis, family dysfunction and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Thus, their adjustment in the

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United-States is far from smoothly achievable due to traumatic experiences of the war and its aftermath. This dissertation research studied the relationship between the Vietnam War related traumatic experiences and the adjustment of the Vietnamese refugees in the new land. The findings consistently supported the hypothesis that the Vietnam War and its aftermath caused a long-term negative impact on the adjustment process of the Vietnamese refugees in the United States. It was also found that to cope with new circumstances, the refugees were in desperate need of services to alleviate their stresses but the needed services were often underutilized and less effective. Better understanding and further information about the refugee population will help mental health or psychotherapeutic professionals provide culturally and psychosocially appropriate services to their target clients.

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GLOSSARY

Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN): The military ground forces of the South Vietnamese government (Republic of Vietnam) until its collapse in April 1975. ARVN originated in the Vietnamese military units raised by French authorities to defend the Associated State of Vietnam in the early 1950s. During the peak of the Vietnam War, it grew to over 1 million men and women organized into eleven army divisions.

Boat people: Waves of refugees from Vietnam fled across the South China Sea after the Fall of Saigon in 1975. The flood continued into the 1980s. Majority were accepted into the U.S. Others were accepted into France, Australia, Canada, and other nations. Many fell victim to pirate attacks in the Gulf of Thailand, drowned, or endured starvation and dehydration as a result of their escape in ill-equipped and undersized vessels. Those who reached safety in neighboring Southeast Asian countries were accorded temporary asylum in refugee camps while awaiting permanent resettlement in industrialized Western nations willing to accept them.

Cao Dai: Indigenous Vietnamese religion centered in Tay Ninh Province, southern Vietnam. It was founded and initially propagated by Ngo Van Chieu, a minor official who, in 1919, claimed to have had a series of revelations. The faith grew under the leadership of Le Van Trung, its first "pope" or Supreme Chief, chosen in 1925. Doctrinally, the religion is a syncretic blend of Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Western nineteenth-century romanticism. Before the fall of Saigon, the Cao Dai had about 1 to 2 million adherents.

H.O. (Humanitarian Operation): In 1989, under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State's Orderly Departure Program, the ex re-education camp detainees and their dependents were accepted into the U.S. The ex-detainees were high-ranking civil servants, military officers, well-known politicians, and prominent citizens who had close association with the U.S. presence in

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Vietnam or with the former government in South Vietnam prior to 1975.

Hoa Hao: Indigenous Vietnamese religion centered in An Giang, southern Vietnam. It was founded in the 1930s by Huynh Phu So, a prominent figure in Chau Doc Province. Doctrinally, it was known as Hoa Hao Mahayana Buddhism. Before the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Hoa Hao had more than 1 million followers.

Indochina War I (1946-54): It was an anti-French colonialism War, also known as the Viet Minh War. The two military forces involved in the war were France and the Viet Minh, a Vietnamese communist-dominated coalition of Indochinese nationalist elements. The French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954 marked the final episode of the war. The conflict was officially ended by the Geneva Conference of July 1954 and Vietnam was divided into two parts, North and South at 17th Parallel.

Indochina War II (1954-75): Armed conflict that pitted Viet Cong and PAVN units with Chinese and Soviet logistical and materiel support on one side against ARVN, United States, and smaller forces from the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Australia, Thailand and New Zealand on the other. All ground battles occurred in southern Vietnam. Part of the conflict also involved an intensive air war over North Vietnam and Laos from 1965-73.

MIA (Missing-In-Action): The United-States term for servicemen who remained unaccounted for at the end of the Vietnam War. Each year, the United States spends \$19

million searching for the remains of some of the 1,992 Americans who are unaccounted for in Southeast Asia.

New Economic Zones: After 1975, the Vietnamese communist regime set up population resettlement scheme in southern Vietnam and for the southern Vietnamese people only. In theory, the Economic Zones were created to increase food production and alleviate population pressure in congested urban areas. In reality, however, the sites selected for resettlement previously had been undeveloped or had been abandoned in the turbulence of war that made Economic Zones a harshly punitive program.

O.D. P. (Orderly Departure Program): O.D.P. was established in 1979 to provide a legal alternative to the dangerous flight of the Vietnamese refugees by boat.

People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN): North Vietnamese communist army. It is the military forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (until 1976) and, after reunification, of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. PAVN played a main role to invade and conquer South Vietnam during thirty year Vietnam War.

Re-education Camps: Following the collapse of the South Vietnamese government in 1975, the communist government immediately set up a re-education program. According to new rulers, the Socialist re-education program officially purported to show the new regime's clemency towards its defeated enemies by giving them a chance to change themselves and to make them fit in the new society. In practice, the euphemism was used to cover a revengeful

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operation of hard labor camps, in which, the detainees were forced to live under dehumanizing condition without trial.

Refugee: According to the US Department of State, a refugee is, "...a person who is outside his/her country and is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of a well-founded fear that he/she will be persecuted because of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group." (complete definition)

Viet Cong: (Vietnamese Communist). The People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF), more popularly known as Viet Cong (VC), was the military arm of the National Liberation Front (NLF). Established at the end of 1960, the VC was created by the North Vietnamese Communists to escalate the armed struggle in South Vietnam.

Viet Minh (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi): The Vietnamese Independence League, a coalition of nationalist elements dominated by the communists and led by Ho Chi Minh. The movement first identified itself in May 1941, when it called for a general uprising against the French colonial rulers. It proclaimed the independence of Vietnam on September 2, 1945, and led a decade long anti-French guerrilla war that brought the conflict to an end by the victory at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

Vietnam War (1954-1975): In 1956 instead of conducting a General National Election in accordance with the Geneva Accord, both sides, North and South Vietnam, committed in a bloody civil war that aimed to gain a final military victory. The contemporary world superpowers involved in the conflict: Soviet Union and China supported North

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Vietnam and the United States supported South Vietnam. The war ended in 1975 with heavy casualties of both sides: More than 4 million people including Vietnamese servicemen and civilians of North and South Vietnam died.

CHAPTER I PROBLEM STATEMENT

1. Statement of the Problem

Following the fall of Saigon in 1975, a steady twenty-five year exodus has brought more than a million Vietnamese refugees to the United States. Four distinct groups have left Vietnam by any available means to come to the United States. Each group brought with it a unique experience of the Vietnam War and post-war Vietnam. These groups were:

1. Those who were evacuated in panic by American helicopters, planes and warships as the war drew to an end,
2. Those who left the country shortly after the fall by boats called “the boat people”,
3. Those who left following the exodus of the boat people under the US government-monitored program O.D.P. (Orderly Departure Program),
4. Those who were detained in the Re-education Camps for three or more years are allowed to resettle in the US together with their dependents.

The purpose of this study is (1) to explore the relationship differences between these four distinct groups and their adjustment as refugees here in the United States, and (2) to gain a greater understanding of the specific impact the Vietnam War and subsequent changes that occurred in Vietnam had on each group of refugees.

2. History of Vietnamese refugee exodus

The thirty-year Vietnam War came to an end on April 30, 1975 with the North Vietnamese communist victory over the South Vietnamese “nationalist”

government. This is the most striking turning point in the contemporary history of Vietnam. A quarter century has passed since the war ended in 1975, but its aftermath is lasting far beyond common expectation. The Vietnamese people continue to pay a heavy price for a war that was supposedly fought on behalf of their best interests; however, in reality, the war had a contrary effect on the fate of the people and the future of the country.

All Vietnamese – victors and defeated alike – have been overburdened with ecological devastations, post-traumatic experiences, war-ravaged societal structures, crippled state of mentality and the like. Coupled by psycho-social problems, the ill-prepared victors reacted harshly toward the defeated South Vietnamese former high ranking officials and their immediate families, exacerbating the situation. The Vietnamese refugee population in America, as well as those in other countries, are among the survivors of this prolonged war; and many of them are still suffering in silence its aftermath.

Immediately following the fall of South Vietnam the new government officially stated that Vietnam would “move to socialism without going through any transitional capitalist stage.” This hasty application of socialist transformation, alien to the South, combined with high-handed measures implemented by incapable administrative cadres coming from the North, exacerbated the difficulties of the Southern Vietnamese who faced life under the “revolutionary” government. In the years following 1975 the rising expectation of what the new rulers claimed as a revolutionary era for war-torn Vietnam gradually turned into a pipe dream in the minds of the South Vietnamese, who had become disillusioned with the bitter reality. Hundreds of thousands of people were uprooted by forced

relocation to rural New Economic Zones or sent to Gulag-styled re-education camps, suffering severe physical and material hardships due to starvation diet, bitter labor, indoctrination, and mistreatment. This problem caused a steady stream of “multiple wave” refugees, including “land people,” “boat people,” Amerasians, and the most recent exodus of more than 100,000 former prisoners in re-education camps, and their relatives.

Vietnamese refugee arrivals occurred, chronologically and circumstantially, in four essential “waves” or four different groups:

- Group 1 or “Seventy-Fivers” refugees: As South Vietnamese high-ranking officials or governmental inner circle, they were airlifted or evacuated out of South Vietnam by other means just hours before, during, or shortly after the fall of Saigon in 1975.

- Group 2 or “Boat people”: They were uniquely known as “boat people”. After 1975, the communist government announced that its tasks were to implant a revolutionary structure, replace military struggle with class struggle, and impose socialism on all Vietnam. Facing the bitter reality of socialist transformation, in 1976 and 1977 more refugees began leaving their homeland in response to repressive Communist policies or simply out of dissatisfaction with the new state of affairs. By the end of 1977, the number of people fleeing Vietnam, mostly by boats, increased dramatically as regarded as the “boat people”.

- Group 3 or “ODP” (Orderly Departure Program): When the flow of refugees reached a point where the first-asylum country could not cope, with 10,000 to 15,000 exits per month from Vietnam, ODP was established in 1979 to

provide a legal alternative to the dangerous flight of the Vietnamese refugees by boat. Among those clients of ODP, Amerasians and their families were classified as immigrants, but also granted refugee benefits. Amerasians (Afro-Amerasians and Euro-Amerasians) are those individuals who were born from relationships between American servicemen and Vietnamese women. As children who were born from short-term relationships with absent, foreign fathers, they suffered a great deal of their childhood through the post-war period. The U.S. legislation called the Amerasian movement “coming home”.

- Group 4 or “H.O.” refugees: In 1989, under the auspices of the U.S. Department of States’ Orderly Departure Program, the former re-education camp detainees and their dependents were accepted into the U.S. with a special program widely known as “H.O.” (Humanitarian Operation). Eventually, 159,400 would end up in the U.S. The ex re-education camp detainees are a distinct, homogenous group of new emigrants coming from Vietnam, after they were held captive for at least 3 full years in communist concentration camps, buffeted by whirling geographic and social mobility.

3. Individual and common characteristics of the refugee group

- The Seventy-Fivers: The majority of them were elite, bilingual, well- educated professionals or employees who lived and worked in urban areas. Many left their country with some financial resources. Even so, many of them were deeply shocked by being deposited suddenly into a fast-moving Western society with a secular mass media.

Regardless of their past experience, they have been expected to learn a new language, set new goals, get

whatever education and training they lacked, and start earning their own way.

Those who were already equipped with advanced education and professional experience may be frustrated at not being able to acquire the right credentials or licenses in order to continue the same careers in America.

Psychologically, due to their panic evacuation, pain and personal tragedy still continue to haunt these Seventy-Fivers. Many were struggling with guilt for being among the early deserters of the war and the privileged survivors of the exodus from Vietnam. The discontinuities of experience caused midlife crisis and desire for change among the Vietnamese refugees. As the strangers in an alien society, many of them became aware of their identity when about to enter a crisis.

- Boat people: As compared to the first wave, O.D.P., and H.O. refugees, boat people presented a different profile. Most of them were rural inhabitants - farmers and fishermen. Escaping their beloved homeland was the most extraordinary decision. They were people who in their wildest dreams before 1975 would never have contemplated leaving Vietnam. Yet history had overtaken them, and hanged their lives beyond their imaginings to such a degree that they had decided to leave all they loved behind them, and risk their lives and all the terror of an unknown future in leaving Vietnam.

- O.D.P. refugees: O.D.P. refugees come to the US as immigrants except Amerasians, who were granted refugee status based on their fathers' identity. Arriving in the US by immigrant status, the newcomers were not supposed to get help from any sources other than their relatives who legally play the role of sponsors. Both immigrant and Amerasian groups often had high

expectations of their life to be changed “from dust to gold” in America. Many immigrants and Amerasian youngsters became disillusioned in face of the competition in the land of opportunity and their fathers’ homeland. They were the groups at high risk of identity confusion and maladjustment in the new society due to the mismatch between unrealistic expectation and reality.

- H.O. refugees: Before 1975, they were high-ranking civil servants, military officers, well-known politicians, prominent citizens who had close association with the U.S. presence in Vietnam or with the former government in South Vietnam. Almost all are males, mostly married. In their time, they were the people of middle class or higher, if not elite, in the South Vietnamese society. In average, they suffered about 7 years in the concentration camps, where they were regularly subjected to psychological torture, brainwashing, and hard labor. The disruption of South Vietnam society after 1975 was brutal, miserable, and grossly traumatic. Consequently, in the American society, they appear to be extremely vulnerable to the problems of mental health, identity crisis, and PTSD.

4. The problem of adjustment in the new land

Whether fleeing by land, sea, river, or by whatever means, the refugees faced many hardships before arriving at their first settlement camps. They experienced lack of food and water, the fear of being caught and murdered by patrolling soldiers, facing rough seas, pirates looting and raping in tiny boats not meant for sea-travel. It is widely estimated that one out of every three Vietnamese boat people was not successful in reaching the “shores of freedom”.

The hard fate of the refugee would not be better at

the refugee camps. Confronted with a hostile native population, food and water shortages, lack of medical supplies, poor sanitation, and over-crowding, the mental and physical health of the refugees were racked further.

In the United States, the critical changes that have occurred in the lives of the refugees have brought about many emotional and psychological problems. Bearing a loss of homeland and possessions, separation from loved ones, and bitter experiences under the new regime, the Vietnamese refugees are the spiritually injured people walking through life. In America, they are confronted by a change in job status and an entirely new way of life. For many refugees, identification with the family or village has been destroyed, and the vast majority of the refugee population has experienced a deep sense of uprootedness and alienation.

The hardship of going back to school or taking job-training at middle-age, the difficulty of finding jobs, intense competition, the change of role playing in family structure are among the most frequently encountered difficulties for the refugees in their newly adopted country.

By and large, for the Vietnamese refugees in 1975 and the years later, their flight was one of a series of evacuations and relocations. The Vietnamese had made such moves in the past 30 years under pressure of the Indochina war. In such a changing situation, their reaction, emotionally and socially, has been interpreted as “deviance or something wrong” by psychiatrists.

In comparison between the refugee and the migrant, Rumbaut (1977) indicated:

“Migration is the epitome of change, and the

refugee is the epitome of the migrant. The kinds of life events that accumulate the stresses of change, loss, and social undesirability weigh most heavily upon the person who moves from one stable cultural niche to another. In consequence, depression, open or masked, is the most prevalent psychiatric condition in migrants and others who are subjected to massive alteration of accustomed life circumstances.” (p.125)

Although being uprooted repeatedly throughout the thirty years of war, the Vietnamese refugees in America first experienced “exile shock”, that is, the delayed realization that almost everything that matters is beyond control: separation from family, culture, job, and significant sources of self-validation; length of exile; return to the homeland; and availability of choices (Rumbaut and Rumbaut 1976, 1994). They turned out to be the strangers in a western, industrialized society. They were horrified by the feeling of emptiness, worthlessness, alienation, and helplessness on the shores of America. The simple question “ Who am I ? “ which did not make much sense in their homeland became highly important in the new country. They appeared not to fit any ethnic groups but their own in relation to the other ethnic members of this pluralistic society. Thus, refugees gazed inquiringly inward, in an attempt to penetrate the extremely complicated structure of the inner self. They were surprised to discover that their roots, traditional values, folk theory, social norms, et cetera, were left behind. A sense of “nakedness” in a new land and before strangers frightened them. In such a psychological situation, the more

Vietnamese refugees became aware of their identity and family functioning in the new land, the more likely they were to enter a crisis.

The serious consequences of the Vietnam War and its aftermath were the loss of the sense of identity, which causes individual and family dysfunction. This is inevitable in the situation of being uprooted and forced relocation.

The common assumption was that the problems caused by war would leave no vestige in the light of materialistically prosperous Western countries. But the thirty-year war has persistently imprinted its influence in the hearts and minds of millions of Vietnamese living abroad. A frequent and predictable aftermath of the experience is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is a symptom complex with grief, pain, horror, shame, and self-doubt.

The fall of South Vietnam opened a new chapter in Vietnamese history. Following the panic exodus in 1975, the life-and-death escapes and orderly departures from communist-controlled Vietnam drew much attention and sympathy from the international community. A nearly twenty-five year exodus had brought more than a million Vietnamese refugees to the United States. How Vietnamese refugees integrated to the mainstream and how the Vietnam War impacted these refugees in the United States will be the main issue of study and research of this dissertation.

5. Theoretical Framework

The following terms are used throughout the dissertation:

Identity: This is the continuity experienced by a person while dealing with an inner world and external

reality. Each person is unique, each person is different. Many components contribute to a person's individuality and together they comprise a personal identity. The concept of identity is considered from the perspective of Erik Erickson. It is defined as the integrative effect of feelings, needs, individuality, worth, and purpose recognizable to oneself and to others (Erickson, 1963).

Biologically, a person inherits certain genes. Different biological make-up lies at the root of diversity among people and to an extent affects identity. The interactions with the environment, society and institutions play a great part in molding behavior and influencing feelings about the self. In addition, cultural background and socioeconomic conditions of one's family associated with the experiences throughout life also play a vital role in the make-up of a person's identity.

The development of identity is a constantly ongoing process. Although identity is formed during adolescence, it continues to be sensitive to life events that occur in adulthood. The experiences throughout life, with countless influences, make up a person's identity.

According to Erik Erikson (1963), the process of identity formation “ emerges as an evolving configuration, a configuration which is gradually established by successive ego-syntheses, and re-syntheses throughout childhood; it is a configuration gradually integrating constitutional givens, idiosyncratic libidinal needs, favored capacities, significant identifications, effective defenses, successful sublimation, and consistent roles.” (p.132)

Human life is a changing process. Smooth transition with favorable feedback from significant others will increase self-esteem, self-worth and produce a well-integrated person. Any trauma such as relocation, family

breakdown, war exposure, or the death of loved ones will hinder normal formation and a strong sense of identity.

In attempting to categorize the identity concepts, Goffman (1961) has isolated three kinds of identity which have relevance in describing and understanding human behavior.

Ego-identity is a creation of the self. It is the individual's subjective sense of his own situation, own continuity and character resulting from the integration of his internal and external life experiences. Life experiences require interpretation and how one construes events will determine reaction and action. Correct interpretation, reaction and behavior coupled with reinforced feedback influences positive self-concept. Negative feedback over a long period of time is not conducive to the development of a good self-concept. With a good ego identity a person will exude self-assurance, confidence and conviction.

Personal identity refers to those unique aspects of the individual which differentiate him from all others. This is a mask that hides inner feelings. Sometimes a person may appear to be the "most together" integrated person around, but when a tragic event occurs, like the death of loved one, he may go to pieces. He may act in a totally unacceptable manner to the people around him. He may even rearrange his life, which can include relocation and new groups.

Social identity is a collective identity. People identify with a family, group, ethnic minority or a nation. One's social identity comprises those categories and attributes which are imputed to an individual by society. In this concept individual differences are not important; generalities are the norm.

The study of identity is considered to be as strategic in our time of mass population movements as the study of sexuality was in Freud's time (Erikson,1963). Indeed, man's search for identity has become a collective phenomenon. Faced with the identity problems, the member of a minority group in a pluralistic society

“...looks helplessly around himself only to meet the coolness and detachment of this modern world. He gazes inquiringly inward, in an attempt to penetrate the extremely complicated structure of his inner self”
(Mostwin, 1972, p.1)

With particular attention to ethnic minority groups, Norton (1977) has developed a concept she calls “ The Dual Perspectives”. She feels it is especially well suited for working with ethnic minorities. The concept acts on two levels: The family and neighborhood; the immediate world and the dominant system with all of society.

Although Vietnamese refugees tend to cluster together in sub-communities, recreating a miniature version of their familiar world in a new land, they also have to deal with the dominant system, which controls the power and assets. It is obvious that in this industrialized nation power and assets are foundation of the value system. Institutional racism and discrimination are common in the United States. Dealing with these issues becomes a way of life, but it will leave scars. Refugees become distrustful of the system and with society and have a tendency to stay with their own groups. The development of an integrated individual identity in such a condition can be extremely difficult. As a consequence, the conflict between the immediate and larger environment often leads refugees to a period of long term

identity crisis that affects their psychosocial development and progressive development.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): PTSD is a severe anxiety reaction to a traumatic event or a series of events, in which, people are exposed to the particular kind of intense stress encountered in war zones, imprisonment, natural disaster and other catastrophic situations. Post-traumatized reaction develops outside the range of usual human experience. Stress reaction may surface after months or delay even many years.

Trauma means wounding. In mental and psychological development, trauma refers to the wounding of the emotions, the spirit, the will to live, beliefs about the self and the world, the dignity and the sense of security.

Many Vietnamese refugees who have survived traumatic events of war often continue, even many years later, to re-experience elements of the trauma whenever they are confronted with situations in which they have emotional and physical feelings similar to the ones experienced during a nearly lifetime of war.

Although PTSD is a new name for an old problem in the field of traumatology, it was only officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 (in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition, DSM-III). Historically, it was widely known that Vietnam War played a significant role in the process of learning about the anxiety disorders. PTSD sufferers in Vietnam War are killing field survivors, refugees, prisoners of wars, combat veterans and others who have been subjected to long-term or severe trauma. Matsakis (1994), with extensive researches and studies about Vietnam veterans, writes that PTSD used to be associated primarily with the struggles of Vietnam

veterans. There should be no shame attached to PTSD; it is often the most courageous persons in a battlefield who get hit by this syndrome.

Technically speaking, PTSD is not a mental illness, but a syndrome. In studies of Vietnam war veterans, those who dealt with logistics-related services were less likely to develop PTSD than those who directly took part in combat. Likewise, among the Vietnamese refugees, the more people exposed to the war the more likely they experienced re-traumatization.

PTSD symptoms are not the same, but they take different forms in different people, depending on their personal factors such as culture, personality, experience, lifestyle, spiritual belief. According to the DSM IV (1994), the handbook used by all mental health professionals, there are six criteria for the clinical diagnosis of PTSD. The most common symptoms occur to the Vietnam war survivors are as follows:

1. Re-experiencing the Trauma: Flashbacks, nightmare, hallucination, intrusive thoughts are re-experiencing symptoms. They are forms of uncontrollable invasion of the present by memories of the past. During a flashback, people do not lose consciousness, but just leave the present temporarily and find themselves back in the past. In the moment of flashback, people may see scene of the trauma, smell its smells, and hear its sounds.

Flashbacks may also be unconscious. During unconscious flashbacks people engage in behavior motivated by some memory of the traumatic event without being aware of a memory of the specific event motivating their behavior.

Flashbacks are usually last anywhere from a few seconds to a few minutes or even hours in some rare cases.

Flashbacks, nightmares, hallucination are disruptive, likely terrifying. Mentally, symptoms of flashbacks are the source of considerable loneliness, self-disparagement, and other forms of suffering and misery.

During the recall stage of the PTSD cycle, besides the critical moments of flashbacks, the war survivors may have dreams or nightmares about war-related events. They may shake, shout, and thrash about it. Upon awakening, they may or may not remember the dream. However, the feelings of terror and fear they experience in the dream may persist for quite some time.

Insomnia or sleeplessness is also associated with hyper-arousal. It has been associated in the war survivors' minds between being asleep or lying down and being in danger. Therefore, they may feel they have to be on alert at bedtime.

2. Numbing and Avoidance: Physically, contemporary biological researchers have shown that the body often emits a natural anesthetic that permits human body experience minimal pain from serious injuries. In several cases, due to this natural anesthetic, severely wounded war victims are able to walk or even run kilometers on rough paths to safety. Similarly, the psyche, in self-protection, can numb itself against onslaughts of unbearable emotional pain. This deadening, or shutting off, of emotions is called psychic or emotional numbing. It is a central feature of PTSD and has been found among survivors of all forms (Matsakis, 1996). Numbing and avoidance or dissociation are less dramatic than re-experiencing phenomena, but still cause clients considerable emotional pain.

3. Survivor Guilt and Self-Blame: Self-blame and survivor guilt are common symptoms found among combat

veterans and re-education camp survivors. The self-blame stems from bitter experiences of failure, the difficulty accepting their powerlessness in the traumatic situation, and from society's blame-the-victim attitudes. Self-blame is a psychosocial reaction that serves as an escape from feelings of powerlessness and helplessness.

Severe survival guilt is guilt at having survived the war while others, perhaps more deserving, have died in battlefields, re-education camps, and while escaping Vietnam after 1975.

PTSD is a severe anxiety reaction to a traumatic event or a series of events, in which people are exposed to intense stress such as that encountered in war zones, imprisonment, natural disaster and other catastrophic situations (Matsakis, 1994). Post-traumatized reaction develops outside the range of usual human experience. Stress reaction may surface after months or even after many years.

Vietnamese refugees who have survived traumatic events of war often continue to re-experience elements of the trauma whenever they are confronted with situations in which they have emotional and physical feelings similar to ones experienced during the war. Many, especially the re-education camp detainees, find themselves spiritually wounded strangers in the new land. The identity crisis, along with PTSD, are the enemies within a mine in the mind, unidentified and invisible even to those who suffer directly from its effects (Tucker, 1999).

6. Significance of the study

Despite the hospitable invitation offered in the Emma Lazarus poem glittering at the base of the Statue of Liberty ("Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled

masses yearning to breathe free..."), not all newly arriving Vietnamese refugees have been welcomed to America. They came to the United States at a time when racism and hate crimes are serious concerns to the American diverse society. The newcomers were spiritually and mentally wounded people walking through unfamiliar ways of a strange society. Many Americans overtly showed negative attitudes toward the refugees, especially to those whose socioeconomic background was likened to unskilled rural laborers. That negative view in the mainstream, coupled with the lack of "minority knowledge" and cultural insensitiveness practiced by Western social workers, therapists and other professionals, caused an inferiority complex and under utilization of existing social services by Vietnamese refugees.

Among the materials written about identity crisis and post-traumatic stress disorder there has been little coverage about Vietnamese refugees. The limited literature sources on the Vietnamese war survivors in the United States are in sharp contrast with the rich materials about the impact of the Vietnam War on the American veterans. This insufficient information about psychosocial development was a major obstacle for service providers to work effectively and sympathetically with Vietnamese clients.

The study is an effort to: (1) focus and identify the backgrounds and real needs of a group of refugees who have double traumatic experiences, war and relocation; (2) explore empirically and comparatively the changing configuration of Vietnamese refugees in America, and the long lasting affect of war on their identity and mentality. It is hoped that this study will (3) contribute to the understanding of the common problems, which existed in every aspect of the Vietnamese refugee's daily life. This

study aims to (4) enhance the helping process by developing accurate client assessment, proposing culturally relevant interventions, facilitating the worker-client relationship, initiating mutual understandings and bridging the gaps between the practitioner and the client needed in the psychotherapeutic process.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The Vietnam War and its lasting impact has been one of the most commonly addressed phenomena in the last half of this century. It has been the subject of hundreds of thousands of newspaper and internet articles, thousands of books, and numerous movies and television documentaries. However, many virulent myths about the Vietnam War have been showcased in a number of deplorable books and mass media events that made myths take the place of facts in the mind of an alarming number of people. The former commander-in-chief of American military forces during the last phase of the Vietnam War, President Nixon, commented:

“No event in American history is more misunderstood than the Vietnam War. It was misreported then, and it is misremembered now. Rarely have so many people been so wrong about so much. Never have the consequences of their misunderstanding been so tragic.” (Nixon, 1985, p.9).

The Vietnam War is a major turning point in the history of Vietnam. Over a very long period of time, different local, national, and international political powers and armed forces publicly, as well as secretly, were involved in Vietnamese internal affairs and external conflicts. The complexity of the Vietnam reality has caused many more misunderstandings and wrong assumptions about Vietnam and its people. The lack of insight and limited information has contributed to that

shortcoming. Disproportional information about the Vietnamese refugees is so evident that among over 100,000 Vietnam War-related articles on the internet and approximately 500 published books in English about Vietnam and the Vietnam War, there are just a handful of books and articles exploring the consequences of war on Vietnamese refugees (Tran, 1999). Postwar public attention today has avoided the real Vietnam and Vietnamese sufferings. Most war public discourse, that professedly has been about “Vietnam”, has really been about Americans and their struggle to recover from the war (Appy, 1999).

The news media-oriented literature with exaggerations has painted an untrue picture about a Vietnam in war and a post-Vietnam culture for the world public. The fact is that as many as 90% of news-media-appointed representatives never even served in Vietnam (Burkett, 1998). The public memory of the Vietnam in war was overshadowed by the famous photographs of the self-immolating Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc, of police chief Nguyen Ngoc Loan’s pistol-to-the temple shooting of a Viet Cong prisoner, or of Kim Phuc being burned by napalm and running naked away from a bombing ravaged background.

Prior to the time of immigration the majority of Vietnamese had taken their own culture for granted. Psychosocially both forced and voluntary refugees in the face of reality of the new land, have experienced cultural mismatch in every walk of life. They no longer possess the familiar way of living they once enjoyed and have to start their new life from scratch. Cultural, language, and socializing barriers keep them from smoothly integrating into the mainstream. In addition to the alien living

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environment, the haunting past is one of the most irresistible forces they encounter. In such a situation, it is hypothesized that there is a direct relationship between the Vietnam War aftermath such as relocation, exposure to the traumatic events (PTSD), and the risk of identity crisis that cause dysfunctional psychosocial development. This exploratory descriptive study will focus mainly upon the question: “What is the impact of the Vietnam War on the Psychosocial development of the Vietnamese refugees in the United States?”

In order to attain a relatively reasonable answer to the issue of Vietnamese refugees and their stress coping under the new environment’s impact, this study will use two methods: reviewing literature and conducting surveys through questionnaires and interviews. The literature review will provide the significant characteristics of the Vietnamese cultural and historical background relevant to the identity formation, personality development, and family functioning of the Vietnamese.

Introduction of Vietnam and the Vietnamese

Physical environment

Vietnam is situated on the eastern coast of the Indochina Peninsula. To the East of Vietnam lies the South China sea; Western Vietnam borders with Cambodia and Laos. North Vietnam lies at the southern border of China; and to the South of Vietnam mostly lies the Gulf of Thailand. The destiny, history and cultural formation of Vietnam has been closely tied to its geographical location. It is considered as the cross-roads of two major Asian cultures, Chinese and Indian, and as a front in the military

alignment of the world.

Extending from 8.33 and 23.22 degrees latitude north, Vietnam is a long, narrow country of 127,250 square miles (slightly larger than the United Kingdom). Structurally, Vietnam has three divisions that are also natural regions. North Vietnam is characterized by high, heavily wooded mountains. The land slopes down from the mountains to the fertile delta of the Red River. Central Vietnam is a long, narrow corridor rising from coastal plains westward to a plateau, then to the Truong Son Mountains. South Vietnam is a low, flat region which centers around the fertile lands of the Mekong River delta which is the most productive agricultural area of Vietnam.

Vietnam is essentially a tropical country with varied climate from North to South. North Vietnam has a tropical monsoon climate with four distinct seasons: warm, wet summer and autumn; mild, dry winter and spring. Central and South Vietnam lie closer to the equator and have a hot and humid climate; there are two seasons: the dry and rainy seasons. The climate plays a vital role in both economic development and personality of the people in each division.

The official census published in 1995 gave the country a total population of approximately 72 million with the majority living in the lowlands. In contrast, the uplands and mountainous areas are sparsely settled, certain portions being almost uninhabited.

About 85 percent of the population is of Vietnamese ethnic origin.

“The ethnic and geographical origins of the Vietnamese people are still a matter of controversy. The common theory is that the

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Vietnamese resulted from Tse-Kiang valley in China and the inhabitants of the Red River Delta originally coming from Indonesia.” (Huynh, 1980, p. 1,2.).

Of the several minority groups, the Chinese are the largest. It is estimated that there are about two million Chinese who concentrate in the Chinatown of Cho-Lon and scatter all over the country. They live mainly in the cities as merchants, contractors, managers, brokers and lenders. Another important minority is the mountain tribesmen. There are about 60 different tribes usually known as “Montagnards” (Moi: Uncivilized people). The Montagnards have little contact with the rest of Vietnamese society. The other ethnic groups are the Chams, the Cambodians, the Malays, the Indians, and the French. In the course of southward expansion, the Vietnamese completed the destruction of the kingdom of Champa in the fifteenth century and absorbed the eastern part of the Khmer empire before the arrival of the French. Existing on a rice culture, the physical elements play a great part in the Vietnamese way of life especially identity and family functioning.

Historical setting

Vietnam has more than 2,000 years of recorded history, to which legend adds 2,000 more. The Vietnamese are intensely proud of having been an independent and unified nation and equally take pride in their cultural heritage although they also experienced repeated foreign invasion and domination over long periods. Under no circumstances did the Vietnamese give up independent national aspirations. They proved, as always, to be ready to

endure almost unbelievable hardships in order to preserve their national and ethnic identity.

1. Historical origins (until 111 B.C.)

The early history of Vietnam is obscure. According to legend, the first king of Vietnam, Lac Long Quan, (Dragon Lord of the Lac) was of the race of dragons, and chief of the watery breeds. King Lac Long lived with Au Co who was of the race of fairies, the immortals sprung from the earth. Au Co gave birth to a hundred eggs, from which there hatched a hundred sons. The bravest among them succeeded King Lac Long to become the Hung Vuong (mighty King) and ruled over the kingdom called Van Lang. The mighty Brave Kings founded the first dynasty, Hong Bang, and reigned from 2879 BC to 258 BC. In fact, “the resemblance suggests not only Chinese influence but an effort by the Vietnamese chroniclers to show that in origin and antiquity Vietnam was in no way inferior to dominant China.” (Smith et al., 1967, p.34)

2. Chinese domination. (111 B.C - 938 A.D).

The Chinese Han dynasty sent the armies to invade the kingdom of Nam Viet in 111 B.C. This event marked the end of the legendary period of Vietnamese history. The conquerors renamed the country Giao Chi and affiliated it as the southernmost Chinese province to the Chinese empire. Although confronted with oppressive Chinese officials, the Vietnamese were conscious of their distinctive ethnic identity and tirelessly resisted and expelled invaders from the North. Armed revolt in A.D. 39 led by two sisters, Trung Trac and Trung Nhi briefly threw off the Chinese yoke. Additionally, several anti-Chinese revolts were attempted; in A.D. 248 Lady Trieu Au incited an

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uprising which was harshly suppressed the following year. Ly Xuan in 589 and Ly Phat Tu in 602 were remarkably unsuccessful in revolts to overthrow the Chinese authorities. The Vietnamese were frequently in revolt in defiance of brutal suppression and unjust degradation from the enemies. The leaders of the revolts striving for national independence throughout a millennium of Chinese domination are highly honored as national heroes and heroines in the history of Vietnam (Tran Trong Kim, 1955)

3. Independence (938-1883).

In A.D. 938, Ngo Quyen, in a struggle culminating in the battle of Bach Dang River, defeated and drove out the Chinese forces and liberated Vietnam from the Chinese domination. This historical event opened a new era of national independence and prosperity for Vietnam during the next 900 years.

Nine centuries of independence was a period of population growth, territorial expansion, economic prosperity, cultural development and social stability. Vietnam was autonomously ruled by the great Vietnamese dynasties as follows:

The Dinh Dynasty	(968-980).
The Le Dynasty	(980-1000).(Anterior Le)
The Ly Dynasty	(1009-1225).
The Tran Dynasty	(1225-1400).
The Ho Dynasty	(1400-1407).
The Le Dynasty	(1428-1788).(Posterior Le)
The Tay Son Dynasty	(1786-1802).
The Nguyen Dynasty	(1802-1945).

With the exception of a 20-year interlude of Chinese reoccupation early in the fifteenth century, the Vietnamese successfully swept away the repeated invasions of the

Chinese during the period from the eleventh to eighteenth centuries (The Vietnam History Review, 1968).

4. French colonization. (1858 - 1954)

Stemming from the French national desire for the economic benefits and military advantages in Asia, the French colonists (thời dân Pháp) aggressively waged a series of military interventions to conquer Vietnam. In September 1857, the French expeditionary force started their conquest by attacking Danang; and the city was captured in 1858. The French thereafter turned their attention to the south and then to the north. After 1884, they expanded their domination all over the country. Vietnam then lost its name, its independence and its unity under the so-called “French Indochina”, in which

Vietnam was merely an area comprising Tonkin (Northern Vietnam), Annam (Central Vietnam), and Cochinchina (Southern Vietnam). The name “Vietnam” was officially eliminated.

French colonialism, by its nature, was a concerted effort of the conqueror to consolidate colonial rule over Vietnam with the aim to facilitate the process of exploitation, oppression and domination.

“In the economic sphere the colonial policy was geared mainly to benefit metropolitan France. Indochina was transformed not only into a source of raw materials but also into an exclusive market for tariff protected French goods” (Smith et. al., 1967, p.45)

French influence left an imprint on nearly every

walk of Vietnamese society. Vietnamese tradition was on trial in the process of a profound transformation. The traditional monarchical system declined sharply. Village institution, the most fundamental ground of Vietnamese society changed dramatically. The tax system, corvee service, and military service overburdened the 95 percent of the population living in the rural areas. The peasants were impoverished by the ruthless economic policy of an imperial operation controlled from Paris. The social interrelation was loosened, and extended family structures were drawn apart between the poorer and richer members.

Rural life had been altered fundamentally by the decline of the subsistence farmer, the spread of landlordism, the gutting of customary welfare palliatives, and the necessity for ever more family members to seek employment far beyond village boundaries. More than ever before, the tax system took from the poor and gave to the rich. (Marr, 1918, p. 413).

The development of French colonialism did not go unchallenged since the Vietnamese were extremely difficult to cope with. Beginning in 1885, the 12-year-old Emperor Ham Nghi led an uprising against the French. Even though the revolt was squashed and the king sent into exile, generations of Vietnamese patriots continued to wage an independence war until the French were totally defeated at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The Vietnamese never gave up aspirations for national independence. In defiance of the reality that the French colonists drowned several Vietnamese uprisings in blood, the anti-colonial movements led by the Vietnamese patriots struggled against French Colonialism. Among those resistance

movements, the Communist armed forces soon became the major power. Working in nationalist disguise, Ho Chi Minh (Nguyen Ai Quoc) the founder of the Indochinese Communist Party since 1930, became the dominant political leader of the 1940s. Communist organizations exploited the non-Communist nationalist groups to strengthen their power throughout the country.

In the midst of the political crisis, taking advantage of their superior military strength, Japanese troops occupied Indochina when the Second World War broke out and then disarmed the French domination in Indochina. The short-lived Japanese occupation of Vietnam came to an end when Japan was defeated by the Allies in August 1945.

On September 2, 1945 Ho Chi Minh, who is widely known as a communist leader behind the name of nationalist patriot, proclaimed the Independence of Vietnam and announced the formation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. To the Vietnamese people, this is the beginning of the 30-year Vietnam War (Dinh Phuong, 1997)

Shortly after the national independence was regained, the French, with the assistance of British, Chinese and even Japanese troops, returned to reoccupy Vietnam. They were faced with a fierce resistance by the Vietnamese people. Eventually, after one century waging an aggressive war against the Indochinese people, the French were defeated and had to withdraw from the Vietnamese territory in humiliation, 1954.

The Vietnam War (1954-1975)

To the Americans and the world, the Vietnam War

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was from 1954 to 1975, but to the Vietnamese, it was a thirty-year war, from 1945 to 1975, since Vietnamese communists publicly became the leading force to take charge of the war against French colonialism. Depending on different standpoints, the war have been labeled as Indochina War, Civil War, Liberation War, War of Ideologies, War to Defend the Anticommunist Front. Cardinal Spellman of New York went as far as to baptize it as the war to defend the Christian civilization. Historians may put the Vietnam conflict in the “War of the Century” category for its lengthy duration and vast physical and spiritual destruction ever experienced in human history. It is the first war the United States has ever lost .

In 1954, the final battle of the first Indochina war took place at Dien Bien Phu with the crushing defeat of France. The Geneva Accords were signed with the partition of Vietnam at the 17th parallel. North Vietnam was under the communist rule and South Vietnam was under a non-communist regime.

In the years that followed, instead of conducting a General National Election to reunite the country as it should have been held in 1956 in accordance with the Geneva Accords, both sides, North and South Vietnam, were moving further and further in their struggle for military victory by committing themselves in a merciless, bloody civil war with the involvement of the superpowers. Soviet Union and China supported North Vietnam and the United States supported South Vietnam. Vietnam thus turned out to be a testing field for the most sophisticated weapons of the two superpowers of the world:

“All modern devices for slaughter are being
laboratory-tested on the flesh of innocent

people, while awaiting the opportunity to use nuclear weapons which would threaten to exterminated the human species.” (Vo, 1965, p.24).

This is a war in which the Vietnamese people were forced to take sides against their will. The brothers of the same ancestors, the innocent civilians, and the poor peasants who shared the sufferings of their compatriots were labeled as either “communists” or “nationalists” and had to fight and kill each other in hatred. Just one month before the end of war, a South Vietnamese soldier wrote in a letter to the American congress “You Just Cannot Desert Us”:

“In spite of its ‘best intentions’ there can be no denying that the United States, with its tremendous war machinery, has in its crusade against communism assumed the right to crush systematically and implacably the country of Vietnam, by pouring more than 6 million tons of bombs of every caliber and make - not including the same amount of bombings, thereby killing more than one million Vietnamese. The U.S. Air Force dropped, during the Second World War, on the battle fields of Europe, the Mediterranean Sea and the Pacific together, only a total of 2 million tons of bombs. We are not talking here about lives of soldiers from both sides, but about the lives of innocent civilians. Also, there can be no denying that the huge flow of dollars has undermined the whole of Vietnamese society, ‘social revolution’ contributing to

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some kind of that went far beyond any imagination and corrupted every stage of administrative and military bureaucracy”. (Washington Post 4-1-75)

Both sides claimed to represent the Vietnamese people, but practically, neither side did. Communists and anti-communists engaged in ruthlessness, brutality, and cruelty in the name of freedom, liberation and happiness of the people. The siding super powers (The United States, Soviet Union, and China) were involved in the war based on their beliefs, interests, and international strategies.

The Vietnam War Aftermath

The legacy of the Vietnam War is still in the midst of contradictory views. However, it is apparently a defeat for the Vietnamese future and development in the long run. Although the Vietnam War was as a “triumphantly holy war” against foreign invasion and claimed to be a great victory for Vietnam, all the Vietnamese people, North and South alike, are the true losers in this war.

The social consequences of this war have not been psychologically discernible. The immense destruction left scars on every facet of Vietnamese society. Although the war came to an end in 1975, the wounds still have not been healed in the hearts and in the minds of several million of the Vietnamese people. Twenty-five years after the end of the war, Vietnam remains one of the poorest countries in the world with a dictatorial leadership and a deplorable human rights record.

In a social sense, the Vietnam War had a profoundly negative impact on the Vietnamese. The family structure

was torn and made dysfunctional. Huge streams of dollars destroyed the roots of the material and spiritual foundation of Vietnam during the war, when all national man power and natural resources were employed to serve the war machine.

Heavy casualties, ecological devastation, political repression, and social dislocation are the consequences of the war that have caused the most long-lasting negative impact on the Vietnamese in the mainland and abroad.

- Casualties: According to casualty data provided by North Vietnam in a press release to Agence France Presse (AFP) on April 3, 1995, on the 20th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, the entire Vietnam War casualty is as below:

Force	KIA	WIA	MIA	CIA
US Forces	47,378	304,704	2,338	7664
ARVN	223,748	1,169,763	unknow n	unknow n
NVA/VC	1,100,000	600,000	unknow n	26,000

Legend: ARVN= Army of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), NVA/VC= North Vietnamese Army/Viet Cong, KIA= Killed In Action, WIA= Wounded In Action, MIA= Missing In Action, CIA= Captured In Action.

For the US Forces, there were an additional 10,800 non-hostile deaths for a total of 58,202.

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For the NVA/VC, there were an additional 101,511 *hoài chiến* (open-arms returnees, an euphemism for defectors).

The civilian casualties of the Vietnam War were 2,000,000 in the North, and 2,000,000 in the South (AFP, 1995). During the Vietnam War, the Vietnamese population was approximately 36,000,000; the Vietnamese casualties represent about 20% of the entire population. On average, every single family had at least one loved one lost in the war.

- Ecological devastation: For nearly ten years, from 1962 to 1971, US aircraft conducted Operation Ranch Hand by spraying about 19 million gallons of herbicide, 11 million of which was Agent Orange. The military purpose for using herbicides was to remove the vegetation cover used by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces for concealment, making their ambushes more difficult and making their armed forces more vulnerable to attack from the air. Also, the spraying of herbicides killed crops by causing them to dry out and deprive enemy troops of food. In all, Ranch Hand planes sprayed herbicides over about 6 million acres, mostly within South Vietnam territory. About 36% of the mangrove forest area in South Vietnam was destroyed and would not return to its natural state for perhaps a century without extensive reseeded (Buckingham, 1999).

The long lasting effect of Agent Orange on human beings and on the living environment is one of the most controversial issues about the aftermath of the Vietnam War. In 1996, the American National Academy of Sciences concluded that there is positive evidence of association between Agent Orange exposure and the

diseases such as soft tissue sarcoma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease, chloracne, acute or fatal respiratory problems in children, and human birth defects. They also found the association between herbicides and six other categories of disease, and more research will be continued at least through 2004 (National Academy of Sciences, 1996). Vietnam veterans suffering from Agent Orange exposure complained about diminished sex drives, psychological problems, numbness, and skin diseases (Green, 1978). After 25 years since the war ended, more serious known and unknown affects of Agent Orange are still haunting the Vietnam War survivors, far from being concluded.

- Political repression: Shortly after successfully taking control of Vietnam, the Vietnamese communist new regime changed their political strategy from compromising to challenging; from forgiving to punitive towards the defeated. A month after the fall of Saigon, one of the official newspapers wrote in June 1975:

“Let us put the old regime on record. We cannot erase the blood debt owed to us by the U.S imperialists and their henchmen. Our people must expose and pinpoint all crimes of the old regime, for the clearer we see its ugliness, the more determined...we are to wipe out its remnants and build a new and better life. We just continue to fight all our enemies in the city, and at the same time, urgently build a better life.” (Saigon Giai Phong, June 2,1975, p.4).

The international community has repeatedly raised concerns about two specific forms of repression: Re-

education camps and the forced relocation of people to rural New Economic Zones. In 1986 the survey conducted by Freedom at Issue classified the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the lowest rating on the seven-point scale that measures political rights. The lowest rating of the scale states:

“At the lowest rating, there is pervading fear, little independent expression takes place even in private, almost no public expressions of opinions emerge in the police-state environment, and imprisonment or execution is often swift and sure.” (Freedom at Issue, Jan. – Feb. 1986, pp.3-17).

Reeducation camp is a euphemism for concentration camp. It is a detention site outside the normal prison system to confine, terrorize, and, in some cases, kill detainees. Targeted detainees are selected groups of people who are confined under inhumane conditions for mostly political reasons. In Vietnam after 1975, reeducation camps were actually hard labor concentration camps set up at isolated jungle areas around the country. Targeted detainees were high ranking military and civilian officials of South Vietnam, or people who associated with the South Vietnamese government, American-backed agencies or activities. The number of re-education detainees was estimated at around half a million. According to the author of “The Cruel Peace”, the number of reeducation camp detainees is much higher than earlier estimation:

“As a matter of fact, we know now from a 1985 statement by Nguyen Co Thach (The Vietnamese secretary of state) that two and a

half million, rather than one million, people went through re-education.” (Desbarats, 1990, p.169).

The entire society was under a cloud of political suspicion. The new rulers were quick in arbitrarily labeling the former regime’s intellectuals, administrative and military personnel as being *phaân ñoäng* (reactionary) or *phaân caùch maïng* (counterrevolutionary). The political accusation without trial gave the accused no legal protection and no rights to appeal. The charges were usually vague and flimsy. By and large, the typically normal responses to that situation were either suffering in silence or fleeing the country at a life-and-death price. In the long term, politically repressive experiences have left permanent scars in the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people, especially to the refugees in foreign countries.

The Source of Identity Formation

Vietnamese values

It would be a mistake to think that the Vietnamese values are merely a carbon copy of Chinese characteristics. In relation to China, there can be no denying that the Vietnamese looked up to Chinese civilization, respected Chinese culture, and were profoundly influenced by Chinese philosophy and social institutions. However, they strongly maintained their national identity and consciously retained their own distinct culture.

“As for the Vietnamese, they considered themselves quite unlike the Chinese and were determined to pursue their

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destiny separate from China. On the other hand, imbued with Chinese values concerning the world order, Vietnam did not mingle with her neighbors.” (Truong, 1967, pp. 29 -30)

The independence of language, writing system, customs, life concept, family institution and social hierarchy from those of Chinese has shaped the Vietnamese values of their own.

“The Vietnamese system of values does not place a great emphasis on material well-being or monetary success per se. In the Vietnamese tradition, hard work, wealth, and possession are recognized as merits, not value as such.” (Vuong, 1977, p.15).

The spirit of national independence (Tinh thần ñoãc laãp quốc gia)

The spirit of independence is highly honored as the foremost value of the Vietnamese. At the dawn of their history, the Vietnamese people were only one out of a hundred Viet tribes living around the Southern Yangtze River who successfully resisted the process of assimilation from the Chinese - Han people. Thus, over the centuries, the Vietnamese have developed a conditioned reflex to external threats. The threats to Vietnam have come from China and from the numerous Western powers. They have learned to cope well with foreign repeated invasions in order to defend their nation’s right to survival as an independent country. The Vietnamese spirit of national

independence is primarily rooted in the loyalty to their tradition, their king and their land. In “An Appeal to Resist the French” written by an anonymous Vietnamese scholar in 1864, the author stated:

“The moral obligations binding a king to his subjects, parents to their children, and husbands to their wives were highly respected. Everyone enjoyed the most peaceful relationships. Our customs and habits were so perfect, that, in our country, in our ancestor’s tombs, and in our homes, all things were in a proper state. But from the moment they arrived with their ill luck, happiness and peace seem to have departed from everywhere.” (Truong, 1967, p.77).

The spirit of independence gradually characterized the nationalism. As immediate responses to foreign intrusion, the Vietnamese rose to struggle against conquerors in countless rebellions and uprisings throughout their history. The continuity of their nationalistic reaction in face of different foreign interventions over a long period of time has been inspiration to their patriotism. This patriotism strongly encouraged them to sacrifice their lives unconditionally in every struggle for national liberation.

Today the Vietnamese personality still bears the mark of the early spirit of independence through generations in the face of the unjust foreign rulers claiming to be just. The Vietnamese generally became distrustful of people from other lands in the initial contact and towards those they do not know well enough:

“They do not feel at ease and talk

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very little in the presence of a stranger. They will hide their guarded reservation by shyness or politeness. Even so, they are well known for their hospitality, which can be warmly accorded even to the newly acquainted or to foreigners.” (Vuong, 1977, p. 36).

The good reputation (thanh danh)

To the Vietnamese, a good reputation is more important than any material possession in the world. A good reputation must be adequately developed on three levels: individual, family, and clan. An individual who damages the good reputation of his own or family will be looked down upon and given a bad name by the others. He then becomes a disgrace for his family and clan. In an immobile society like the traditional Vietnamese community, relationships among members are very close and intimate, and it would be miserable for those who lose the good name and are viewed as morally deviant. They even do not have ground to live within the community. The concept of “face” is very strong among the Vietnamese. “Losing face”, therefore, is often something unbearable.

In order to achieve the good reputation, a Vietnamese should strive to lead a virtuous life by maintaining the purity and equilibrium in spirit, performing with modesty and harmony in behavior, and accomplishing good deeds in action. Morality (ñãio lyù) is culturally emphasized as a primary motivation to lead the course of behavior and action of an individual. A good behavior or heroic action is often valued as the inevitable result of a

right mind. By so conceptualizing, the Vietnamese are very interested in fostering the “healthy spirit.” A sound spirit must be pure, straightforward, noble and tranquil. Behavior, according to Vietnamese tradition, is the performance of moral virtues. The virtues, which have been widely recognized, are the sense of filial piety, loyalty, patience, honesty, righteousness, modesty, and generosity. Among those, the filial piety (*loøng hieáu thaũo*) is the most essential virtue in regard to the family. Allegiance to the family dictates that the Vietnamese think of their parents first. They will proudly and readily sacrifice their well being for the sake of their family’s welfare and harmony. A Vietnamese who lacks filial piety is blamed and despised not only by his family but also by his community. More practically, good action is the surest path to a good reputation. Good actions include unselfish deeds and intellectual achievements. Those who sacrifice the self for the sake of others or society are respected and admired. Learning and knowledge are held in great respect, therefore, educational achievement measured by examination brings great prestige and honor to the learned man and his family.

Harmonious relationships. (*hoøa thuaãn*)

Most Vietnamese believe that all natural movements and all human relationships are controlled by natural principles. The individuals, therefore, are expected to live in harmony with this arranged natural order. This is conceived as a highly delicate art of living.

The management of hostility and the control of hostile impulses was of crucial importance in social interaction. At an early age, Vietnamese children are

taught to control all hostile impulses towards their siblings and their peers by self-suppressing impulsive temper in daily interaction with significant others.

From early childhood one was taught that whatever served to enhance harmony was good and that an insistence on absolutes was to be avoided at all costs. Harmony was to be sought not only with one's own family but also in dealings with all other persons (Smith et. al., 1967).

The Vietnamese tend to care for the other's feelings and make every effort not to hurt any one's feelings. They avoid offending others by behaving modestly and humbly. Violence and confrontation are strongly disapproved. The proverbial saying "A poor peace is better than a good quarrel" or "There's nothing shameful about getting out of an elephant's way" has become a part of the philosophy which guides behavior. In interpersonal relations, including inside and outside the family groups, the Vietnamese desire to establish harmony between the self and the non-self by placing strong emphasis on the predominant attitude towards others, namely, respect. Respect is traditionally shown to the older people, teachers, parents, and virtuous people. The complex system of kinship terms in the Vietnamese language has been utilized as an effective means to express the different levels of respect or disrespect. Harmony is furthermore extended in relation to nature. The Vietnamese view nature as a living entity (thờĩc theỏ) which consciously shares the common feelings of human beings; therefore, the harmony between the inner world (spirit, emotion) and the outer world (nature) becomes a vital source to enrich the Vietnamese's aspiration in many aspects, particularly in artistic activities. As seen through Western eyes, the concept of harmony appears to be passive, non-dynamic behavior, and is

interpreted as heart-orientation or heart-oriented culture. This view is very likely to create the risk of generalization and a stereotypical picture of the Vietnamese. Living in harmony with people and nature does not mean that the Vietnamese are merely the unconscious prisoners of their own implanted social values, without knowing how to cope with the unjust and to struggle face-to-face against their enemies or oppressors.

“Ordinarily giving an appearance of being shy and afraid, the Vietnamese value peace and harmony in all relations. However, when they are faced with danger, or are on the battle field, they display great bravery and know how to maintain discipline, giving death itself as much weight as an airborne thistle-down. Often motivated by compassion for others, they have a strong sense of gratitude.” (Toan Anh, 1967, p.328).

Vietnamese values, reflecting the influence of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, are the behavioral attitudes of people who live with their hearts and minds.

Role of religions

Religion, as well as religious philosophies, has played an essentially important role in the history, practices, concepts, and values in the life and culture of the Vietnamese. Long before Christianity was introduced into Vietnam in the late sixteenth century, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism had been intermingling as One (*Tam giáo ãoàng nguyêân*). The peaceful coexistence of the Three Religions over centuries is a great contribution to

the formation of the Vietnamese identity.

Buddhism (563-483)

Buddhism is the predominant religion in Vietnam. Approximately 80 percent of the population are Buddhists. Buddhism came to Vietnam by the maritime route from India; and from China by land during the Chinese domination. By the close of the eleventh century, Buddhism had planted its roots so deeply into Vietnamese culture that it was no longer considered an imported religion.

The founder of Buddhism is an Indian prince, Siddhartha (Tat Dat Da), who later became Gautama Buddha, which means “the Enlightened One”. For forty-five years the Buddha went about the country preaching and persuading men to follow his way of life. His disciples regard him as the greatest of the world’s teachers and the kindest of men, although not divine.

According to the teachings (giào lý) of the Buddha, every person must suffer the miseries of life from one life to the next through a series of incarnations. Craving wealth is the ultimate cause of suffering. To be free from suffering, one must practice a right way to suppress or remove the cause. To those who choose the path that leads to Enlightenment, there are two extremes of sensuality or uncompromising asceticism that should be avoided. The Noble Path lies between these two extremes and leads to Enlightenment. This is achieved by following the Noble Eight-Fold Path. The Eight-Fold Path consists of right views, right thought, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation. This is called the Truth of the Noble Path to

the Ending of Caving.

Buddhist morality strongly emphasizes on Karma or the law of cause and effect which determines an individual's fate or destiny. This existence of an individual is a result of the previous existence and a cause of the next existence. One life follows another life according to its Karmaic cycle in endless recurrence. The cycle has no beginning and no ending: no one can escape rebirth.

Theoretically, members of Buddha's Brotherhood should associate together with affectionate sympathy, living and receiving the true teaching with humility and sincerity. Members of different social classes should mingle freely and respect each other, maintain a pure spirit and remove all greed, perpetuate perfect harmony between the members, be patient and not argue. These Buddhist virtues have deeply influenced the Vietnamese social relations and spiritual beliefs for many centuries.

Confucianism (551-479 B.C.)

Confucianism is practiced as a socio-political philosophy or a set of social and moral codes rather than a religion in Vietnam. One may find Confucius temples throughout the country, but they are monuments to Confucius as a great educator and philosopher rather than places of worship. Before the French established colonial rule over Indochina, Confucianists may have held high positions in Vietnamese society, but they were scholars and administrators rather than the clergy in a theocratic system. Confucius or K'ung Fu-tzu is the founder of Confucianism. He was born in the state of Lu (now Shantung), China. At age 22, he became a teacher. Pupils came to his home to learn history, poetry, and manners.

Confucius strongly advocated humanism, which aimed to maintain an orderly world. Confucius stressed personal or Self-Cultivation (Tu Thân). In order to attain self-cultivation, one must clearly identify the boundaries and roles of the Three Basic Relationships (Tam Cöông) of ruler and subject, parent and child, and husband and wife. And one must practice the Five Cardinal Virtues (Nguõ Thöôøng) of Benevolence (Nhaân) Loyalty (Nghóa), Propriety (Leã), Intellect (Trí), and Trustworthiness (Tín).

To put in use these moral principles, one must first control and cultivate oneself (tu thân), then rule the family (teà gia), govern the country (trò quốác), and finally serve the world (bình thieân hã).

Confucianism, with its social and political philosophy which was appropriate to the Vietnamese societal structure and was favorable for the monarchy, had a strong impact on the thinking and behavior of the Vietnamese in every walk of life. It became the moral guidelines in the development of the Vietnamese cultural personality.

Taoism (600 - 500 B.C.)

Along with Confucianism, Taoism is another religious philosophy which has a strong hold over Vietnamese thinking and culture. The founder of Taoism is Lao-tzu or Lao-tse, a Chinese great thinker. Taoism stresses the harmony between man and man, and harmony between man and nature; all forms of confrontation should be avoided. Tao (Ñãõ) or the Ultimate is the right path which could be attained by the practice of meditation, simplicity, patience, humility, compassion, and self-contentment. Taoism, by non-action (voã vi), and staying away from

any kind of regulation or organization, will lead to man's oneness with the universe. In Vietnam, Taoist clergymen tended to degenerate Taoism into a system of magic and superstition.

Christianism

Christianity was introduced into Vietnam in the late sixteenth century by Spanish, Portugese, and French missionaries. Catholic religious beliefs and ritual practices played an important role in the Vietnamese history. Catholicism has been portrayed as a religion of compassion, equality and democracy.

The Catholic Church initiated a Westernized method of worship, opened up a new educational system, and pioneered an alphabetic writing system. These contributions changed the general configuration of the immobile society of Vietnam drastically.

In addition to the mentioned major religions, there are two other noteworthy religious sects, Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, which were founded in South Vietnam during the French colonialism. Their influence on the Vietnamese culture has been gradually significant mostly in southernmost areas of the South Vietnam.

With respect to religion, the American is monotheistic, whereas the Vietnamese is polytheistic.

“By and large, the Vietnamese do not follow one religion only, but a mixture of religions and religious philosophies. A Vietnamese may be a Buddhist but also observes Confucian rituals and Taoist teachings, or may even strongly believe in

animism. A Catholic might worship his ancestors and believe in the existence of spirits.” (Vuong,1978, p.12).

The concept of life of the Vietnamese bears the deep imprint of the various religions. They are far from being fanatic, closed, hostile in relation to the religions other than their own. They have taken for granted that by different ways, all religions aim to teach their followers truth, compassion, and righteousness. So their attitude towards religion is positive and respectful. The Vietnamese personality has taken root from religious ideologies. The intermingling of religions, often viewed by Westerners as contradictory and illogical, seems to the Vietnamese to be a natural combination between man and man; and between man and nature.

Many of the Vietnamese values can be identified as part of Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist values. Their behavioral attitude goes hand in hand with their religious attitude. Interpreting this dual attitude of the Vietnamese in their real life, Nguyen Dang Thuc indicates:

Thus religion is not different in its universality but only in its application which must take into account the practical conditions. For example, to youth which is an active and optimistic age full of hope for the future, the practical philosophy of Confucius may be appropriate. But after one has acquired a great deal of experience, has gone through many hardships and come to a thoughtful age, then the philosophy of Lao Tse that liberates man for natural and artistic sentiments or the philosophy of

Buddha that liberates for spiritual truth may be more appropriate. Philosophical systems are only points of view; therefore in Vietnam abstract ideas and thought have always been put to work through practical living. (1965, p.138)

To foster allegiance to the family, for instance, the Vietnamese bear the profound imprint of the moral self of Confucianism, the interpersonal codes of ethics of Buddhism, and the philosophy of harmony of Taoism.

The religious attitude of a typical Vietnamese appears to be very flexible and positive. The doctrines of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism are intimately mixed together along with native beliefs that had existed before these religions were introduced into Vietnam. The common people of Vietnam absorbed the religious philosophies as a means to alleviate their sufferings and to improve their behavioral attitude rather than to indoctrinate themselves.

Living amidst nature in the face of repeated natural calamities and oppressive human events, the Vietnamese learned to be content with their fate. This attitude of self-contentment is rooted from Taoism.

Ancestor worship widely practiced by most Vietnamese is mainly based on the notion of filial piety of Confucianism and the life cycle of Buddhism. Deeply influenced from the Buddhist concept of rebirth or reincarnation, they believe that the spirits of the dead still continue to survive in a mysterious way around them. Most families have ancestral altars installed at the most prominent place of the house. On the anniversary of the death of each ancestor or loved one the members of an

extended family and kinship often get together in the home where the altar of the deceased one is located, to perform memorial rites by burning incense sticks, lighting candles, offering feasts, and praying in the front of the altar. Besides the regular anniversaries, rites are performed bimonthly on the first and fifteenth of the lunar calendar month, and on special events of the family. The further impact of religion on the beliefs of the Vietnamese takes the forms of animism, astrology, fortune telling, omens, and natural phenomenon. These forms of beliefs and practices are particularly widespread in the rural areas.

Vietnamese family

The family is the backbone of Vietnamese society. It is the center of an individual's life, the foundation of culture, and the autonomous unit of Vietnam. Structurally, the traditional family type is the extended family which consists of the parents, all children, their in-laws, and the grandparents. Depending upon economic conditions and space availability, in many cases, the extended family might include as many as four or five generations.

The Vietnamese family traditionally has been viewed as a close-knit social unit from which its members derive interdependence, belonging, support, and security. It is also a place where all members share the joys, the sadness, the happiness and the suffering of life. This is a patriarchal social system, where the senior working male acts as head of the family and the oldest son, in turn, will be the successor of family leadership. Theoretically, the distribution of power and the designation of each member in an extended family system mainly is based on age, gender and position in the family structure. In this system,

the eldest man who is often head of the household is the most powerful one to make final decisions on the family's important matters. But practically, the Vietnamese father equally shares the right and responsibility with his wife in every aspect of family life. The father tends to deal with the matters outside family; whereas, the mother mostly takes care of business within the family.

In the relationship between parents and children, Vietnamese parents prioritize as sacred the responsibility to raise, educate, and train their children. Vietnamese children are taught from an early age to be polite, obedient, and loyal to their parents, older siblings, and relatives. They are also expected to respect their elders and to interact in harmony with everybody outside of the home. Although both parents are expected to have equal authoritarian power over their children, in this male dominant hierarchical system, however, the role played by each parent is somewhat different:

In an Asian family, the father is expected to assume primary disciplinary responsibility for serious infractions by the children, while the mother acts both as a disciplinarian in lesser transgressions and a pacifier, or arbiter in the father's disciplining a child's anti-parental aggression or disobedience (Tran, 1987).

Besides the primary role as a bread-winner, the father is also involved in many other aspects of family life. He has to act very carefully in an effort to set a good example for his children so that they will grow up to embody the qualities of dignity, morality, and loyalty. He is very concerned about his children's education. Whether he is a scholar or an illiterate, a Vietnamese father readily sacrifices his well being for his children to receive a higher education.

The Vietnamese mother is the center of family life. She assumes a great deal of responsibility for taking care of the children and everything inside the home. Once she becomes a mother, rarely does a Vietnamese mother live for herself. She devotes her energies to the best interests of her husband and children. The mother takes pains to protect the reputation of her daughters in their teen-years, and closely watches out the behavior of her sons. If there is any problem of deviant behavior taking place among her children, the mother is the first parent to deal with the situation accordingly, and timely intervene to keep them straight, while the father is expected to be the primary disciplinarian for any serious infractions. Although corporal punishment is culturally accepted as a disciplinary measure, most Vietnamese mothers appear to be very lenient toward their children. Usually the mother simply threatens to beat the child in terms of punishment, but seldom actually does so. Mothers with young children usually hold them more affectionately after contentious situations, and the children seem to quickly forget the punishment (Tran, 1987).

Regardless of age or marital status, the obligation to obey parents and the performance of filial piety are considered a social norm applied to Vietnamese children in relation to their parents.

During the early childhood years, a child is placed under constant care of the mother, often with the help of female members in the extended family. As the child approaches school age the father assumes more responsibility for discipline and socialization of the child. The parents' expectation of the child by this time is good behavior, that is, to be respectful and obedient toward the parents, teachers, extended family members, older siblings,

and the older persons outside the family. Interrupting conversations among older people, talking back to the parents, acting contrary to the parents' wishes are the evidence of misbehavior. Normally, the misbehavior will be soon corrected by parents and significant others. If the child stubbornly clings to bad habits and does not improve his behavior, he will enter the risk of loss of filial piety. This is considered very serious and the family will bear disgrace.

The strong family ties will perpetuate the family lineage through time. The traditional mutual interdependency among generations is the cohesive extended relationship network of the Vietnamese extended family system. Out of a sense of filial piety, children respect and care for their old parents, a most valuable virtue in the Vietnamese tradition, given that in the situation the country cannot afford a social security system to support the elderly. In Vietnamese society, old people are highly respected because they are the embodiment of (lao hieän thaän cuüa) life experience, knowledge, wisdom, and authority. Nursing homes for the elderly are unheard of in Vietnam. The old parents never live in nursing homes but with their children, especially with their eldest son. Any insult to the ancestor or to a respected older person as well as to the aged parents is taken very seriously and sometimes leads to damaging and irreparable consequences (Vuong, 1977).

It has been said, without exaggeration, that in defiance of attacks coming from all directions under the pressures of foreign domination and war, the Vietnamese family is an indispensable bastion to maintain the survival and identity of the Vietnamese people. Pamela Blafer Lack, made a remarkable comparison:

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The Americans have Social Security, unemployment benefits, health insurance, orphanages, psychiatrists, marriage counselors, and old age homes. The Vietnamese have the family. The Americans have television, technology, mobility, independence, privacy, and the women's movement. The Vietnamese have the family (Lack, 1987).

It is suggested that the best way to begin to understand and appreciate Vietnamese culture is to look at the family. Even with modernization, the ancient sense of family is still dear to the heart of the Vietnamese. An individual's achievements and proper conducts are always associated with those of his family as a whole. It is not surprising to learn that a Vietnamese readily forgets himself by sacrificing his future or best interests for the sake of his family's welfare and harmony. In case this "firmly grounded human institution" is changing in a new land as America, the function of the family is about to enter a crisis.

Village (Laong)

The Vietnamese identity is recognized less in terms of family characteristics than of village origin. It is not surprising that, to a large extent, the socioeconomic background, specific profession, and general traits of a Vietnamese can be soon figured out when the people simply know the village of origin. Beyond the family, the village is the focus of life and the only real model of a functioning society. Vietnam has always been a nation of villages. The village itself is a major traditional Vietnamese organization which plays the role of cooperative, protective association.

Physically, each village, which ranges in size from a few dozen to several hundred families, is the very basic autonomous unit of the Vietnamese social structure. Almost every village is separated from the others by natural boundaries such as a river, a range of mountains, a canal, or a rice field.

A typical Vietnamese village is a populated area which catches the sight of outsiders with grey thatched and red tiled roofs evenly and symmetrically spaced emerging from green gardens of fruit trees. Its privacy is protected by a lofty, thick range of bamboo trees surrounding it. Depending on its size, a village may be divided into several smaller units called hamlets (*xoùm*). The hamlet has been the foster ground for kinship and mutual aid. “Sell relatives who live far away to buy next-door neighbors” is a popular saying about the intimacy of those who live in the same village and, especially, in the same hamlet.

Each village has its own governing structure. Although, in principle, the king rules the villages through his mandarins, the villages retain the essential autonomy of relatively self-sufficient communities. The villagers themselves decide how their village would be administered through the village elites. On the subject of being self-sufficient, the Vietnamese have an interesting saying: “The laws of the king yield to the custom of the village” (*Pheùp vua thua lệ làng*).

Within the village, the most important institution is the Council of Notables. Members of the Council of Notables are selected from among the elite of the village whose age and education are highly honored rather than their wealth (Paul Mus, 1949). This council administers the village rules and regulations as well as represents the

village in any dealings with the outside world. Besides the Buddhist pagoda, every village has a communal house called “*nhà*”. This is the shrine of the village guardian spirit and the center of communal life. The administrative meetings of the Council of Notables and the communal village activities are often held in the village “*nhà*”.

Each village contains a network of support systems such as mutual aid societies, the village guilds, the elderly associations, and the like which guarantee every individual personal and economic security. Similar to the Western social services, folk physicians, midwives, and spirit healers within the village provide health care while wise men fortune tellers, matchmakers, and cult committees provide mental health care. Each village also provides its members with a common cultural and social pattern of communication which facilitates mutual support. In the presence of this traditional interrelationship, each villager develops a strong sense of individuality as well as social identity. The Vietnamese, therefore, are fundamentally a village-oriented people. The village is the basic sociopolitical unit, to which they pledge their steadfast allegiance.

A deep tradition of communalism has existed in Vietnamese villages for generations. The village is the nurturing environment of the family that is closest and most involved in the determination of their ancestors' graves, working their traditional lands, sharing their experience and making decision in common with full knowledge of each other's way (Paul Mus, 1949).

Even with Vietnam moving into the modern world through urbanization, the village-oriented nature of the Vietnamese remains. Leaving the homeland is a painful

decision to almost every Vietnamese. For the overseas Vietnamese and those who live far away from their village, whether by choice or by force of circumstances, their heart is always filled with the love for their native place. The nostalgia of the village is expressed throughout folk literature as seen in these lines:

Let us go back and bathe in our own pond.

Whether clear or turbid we are used to its water.

(Ta về ta tắm ao ta. Dù trong dù nước ao nhà
vẫn hôn)

National festivals

Vietnam is essentially an agricultural country. Ninety percent of the population engage in farming. The Vietnamese are a hard-working people, but they can allow occasions for relaxation and entertainment in between the two yearly main crops: Winter-Spring and Summer-Autumn.

Forms of festivities are abundant in local areas such as fairs, contests, religious processions, animal fights, but the greatest festival for all Vietnamese is, no doubt, *the Teát* or the Vietnamese New Year. Actually, the term Teát in Vietnamese derives from the word tieát, which means climate; and people often organize a festival to celebrate the change of the climate. Teát, therefore, has come to mean a festival. There are other “Teáts” during the year, such as Teát Trung Thu (the Mid- Autumn Festival) which is in fact a festive occasion for the Vietnamese children, Teát Thanh Minh (The Memorial Festival) as well as others.

Americans have Christmas, New Year, Easter, and Thanksgiving, but for the Vietnamese, all of those are

rolled into one holiday of holidays, that is the *Teát* of Vietnam.

As most Vietnamese cannot afford summer vacations, weekends, or regular and irregular recesses of any kind, the Tet is a national holiday for all Vietnamese, and is celebrated for several days. For young or old, rich or poor, country or city relatives, the Tet is a time of special veneration of one's ancestors at the family shrine splashed into noisy and festive public celebrations.

The Tet has a special meaning to every Vietnamese. It is a time when every family member wants to be home with their folk as much as Americans do at Christmas.

Preparations for the Tet take many forms and begin months in advance. Houses are painted and remodeled. The ancestor's altar is brightened with ritual items replaced or polished. New clothes are ordered for every family member. A large amount of festival foods are prepared. Outside of the house, streets are cleaner and more colorful, men better-mannered, and ladies more attractive. It is believed that the physical appearance of people and their homes during the Tet is a factor determining social prestige, and those who are more or less concerned about appearances have made every effort to show off their social standing and values. Even economically underprivileged people also make arrangements to clear debts and financial obligations before the New Year comes. (Nguyen Thuan, 1962)

Then the Tet time comes. It begins unofficially on the 23rd of the lunar December (Haêm ba thàng Chaïp) with the farewell ceremony to the Kitchen Gods (OÂng Taùo) who have watched over the household during the year. On the eve of the New Year, people greet their

ancestors' spirits by offering them an elaborate meal (moät böða thònh soäin) on the altar, complete with wine and delicious dishes, in the belief that the deceased (nhöøng ngöôøi quau coá) will join the family in the Tet festivities. [offer a sacrifice: offer to God or a god an animal by killing it in a ceremony.]

At the solemn moment of midnight, the families gather to celebrate *the Giao Thöøa*, the interval between the old and the New Year. Firecrackers, church bells, and pagoda gongs concertedly sound in a joyous and happy fashion.

Even nowadays, the new year begins with several customs and traditions still honored by most Vietnamese. These practices consist in collecting branches or flowers from shrubs or trees on the pagoda grounds as the symbol of good luck (haüi loäc), expecting a good visitor to make the first footing to the house on the New Year's Day (ñäip ñaát), visiting relatives and friends to wish a happy New Year (möøng tuoái, chuüc Teát), and choosing the most auspicious time and direction to get out of home at the first time of the New Year (xuaát haønh).

Tet is a time for the Vietnamese to strengthen the link with the past by worshiping their ancestors and paying respect to their elders, teachers, masters, and benefactors.

Tet is believed to open a new phase of life which is full of good luck, happiness and prosperity and therefore the people appear to be generous, friendly, and hopeful. It is a time of looking back and gazing forward, sorrow for things gone and hope for tomorrow, and of nostalgia and memory blending with the prayerful contemplation of the new (Truong Huyen, 1968)

Relocation as Disruption

Because Vietnam is basically an agricultural nation, peasants constitute up to 90 percent of the country's population.

For centuries, many generations of Vietnamese peasants have clustered into small units that were called "Laøng" (village). These essentially basic units deeply influence their members' emotional, psychological, and conceptual characteristics and play a vital role on the Vietnamese's identity formation.

The typical common Vietnamese have no ideological commitment to anything beyond their own family and perhaps their village. They know little of politics and take little or no interest in the issue of either ideology or dogmatism. The central question of the vast majority of Vietnamese is the matter of life itself. "Of what use is liberation or democracy if one is not alive to enjoy them?" (Luxe & Summer, 1969). What they are interested in is the way of life which causes the least further disruption in their already disrupted lives. Traditionally, the Vietnamese, especially the peasants stubbornly cling to their homeland. Being able to live in their native village and work on their ancestral farmland is obviously a matter of life and death. They have not moved from their homes voluntarily.

Before the war came to an end thousands upon thousands of people were herded together in the war refugee camps, uprooted from all they ever knew or wanted. Their daily life was full of bewilderment, chaos, and disgrace. They had nothing to do and just sat, hopelessly waiting for food or some handouts. Many camps were without work of any kind, so that weeks,

months, and even years were spent in futile idleness and dejection.

Shortly after the end of the war, people were again forced to relocate in New Economic Zones where they found themselves to be neglected as exiles right on their own country.

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, after the fall of Saigon in 1975, and escaping their homeland was an exit of last resort to the South Vietnamese in face of a new regime. Failing to win hearts and minds of the “newly liberated Southerners”, the proud Hanoi authorities accused the refugees as being those who have “committed numerous crimes against the revolution or against the people and have zealously served U.S imperialism, thus following the day of national liberation, attempt to escape the country in the wake of their masters, will be seriously punished” (Nhan Dan, 4-76)

However they were defined, the Indochinese refugees were the most disadvantaged people. They fled their beloved country without knowing where they were going; with a prospect of no return and at a high risk of facing horrible dangers of rough seas, cruel pirates, and deprivation on their way to freedom. They had little hope and no idea as to what their destiny might be. They left Vietnam simply because the new regime held no future for them and their families.

To peasants and fishermen, fleeing their homeland was tantamount to fighting an uphill battle to fit into a new life on foreign soil.

“It means a break with all that one knows about living – how to earn a

livelihood, how to fit into a society, how to respond to the landscape, how to touch, smell and taste. Every human lives with the images of childhood: for the refugee only memories remain. Sometimes, they are replaced by visions of hope for a new world that offers a better way of life. Even if the change to a new way of life is successfully managed, the shock of loss remains. The refugee is thus dispossessed often of material things and always of a personal and social heritage that can never be recaptured” (Grand - Bruce, 1989, pp.5-6).

People in the mainstream of host countries generally have a negative attitude toward a refugee since a refugee is an unwanted person, an uninvited guest who makes a claim upon the humanity of others without often having something to give in return. Yet it is also true that refugees have contributed richly to their adopted countries in various aspects.

It is apparent that to be a refugee is to be refused. The Vietnamese people were made aliens in their own country, this is a first phase to becoming a refugee. Immediately after 1975, they were bitterly refused by the new regime right in the fatherland. The punitive systems such as re-education camps, new-economic zones, and commercial reforms have mercilessly stigmatized and singled out the Southerners from the mainstream. Before becoming a refugee, the Vietnamese first felt as an alien, a stranger or a drifter in the midst of his native country.

The second phase of “refugeeism” is to be refused by other countries. The failure to find asylum in other

Southeast Asian countries was a development unparalleled in the nation's history. Escaping out of Vietnam was a matter of life and death but the refugees had to put up with this fate because they had no other alternative.

Confronted with past experiences of losses, of hardship, and emotional distress, Vietnamese refugees then experienced a sense of disillusionment when they first reached the shores of freedom. It had been widely known that the Indochinese were refused too often by neighboring countries where they sought temporary asylum. The displaced refugees were treated as a burden and a nuisance. After 1980, the Asian countries became more and more stringent to stop boat people from landing along their far-flung coastlines. Refugees were placed well far away from the local population, on uninhabited offshore islands as in Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. In late 1978, Singapore tightened its controls by intercepting, re-provisioning and towing refugee boats back to the international waters. Thai authorities turned their eyes away from atrocities committed by Thai sea pirates against the refugees.

The resettlement process was a distressing experience to every refugee. The screening procedures conducted by the officials of the resettlement countries were a complicated process and time-consuming task. The unstable criteria used to differentiate the refugees who escaped out of their country for political reasons from those who left for economic reasons were a source of permanent anxiety and even a threat to the refugees awaiting resettlement. Not surprisingly a number of refugees turned out to suffer psychotic disorders in such a situation.

In retrospect of a twenty-five-year journey for

freedom of the Vietnamese refugee, Ho (1999) claims, “I belong to a stigmatized race: the Vietnamese boat people. We came from the Far East. Our people fought against and killed each other. We were poor, we were persecuted, and we sailed across the ocean on fragile little boats looking for a holy land, relying on the sympathy of the world. During the journey, we got killed, raped, mercilessly stripped of our possessions, material, emotional, and spiritual. We carry wounds within us wherever we go and we learn to stick with each other for comfort and moral support.”

Refugeeism in America

Through the refugee’s imagination, America was a land of their dreams. Many had high expectations of a wonderful life when they reached the United States. They realized that in this industrialized country they were faced (1) with a loss of role identity and self-esteem, (2) with social isolation caused by cultural, language barriers, (3) with local prejudice directed toward the Vietnamese refugees, and (4) with persistent nightmares about their wartime experiences that lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Unlike immigrants, the refugees started a new life without being prepared. Among those problems encountered by Vietnamese refugees, identity crisis and PTSD are considered as the most serious.

Regardless of their background, very few refugees were accustomed to American culture, so that they faced serious language and cultural barriers.

Language is a primary entrance in getting to know a culture. The refugees, lacking facility with the English language, found themselves strangers who lose connection with the mainstream, drift through the society, and float in

the social cosmos. In terms of language, Vietnamese is vastly different in internal structure from English. Vietnamese is essentially a monosyllabic language as compared to polysyllabic English, furthermore, the pronunciation of English often have no identical sound in the Vietnamese tongue. Because of these difficulties in language, those who have no familiarity with English usually lose patience in the English as a second language (ESL) classes. Language handicap inevitably affects the refugees' familial relationships, their ability to find jobs, their dealings with environment. In the job market, a non-English speaking employee has to face the problems of low wages, underemployment and under-utilization of skills. Worse, language barrier causes mental and psychological disruption to a sizable number of newcomers. A Vietnamese refugee who did not speak English expressed his impression: "It is like we are blind, deaf and mute. We can't read signs or ask for directions so we are as lost as if we were blind. We can't understand what people say to us, so it is like we are deaf, and we can't speak, so it as if we were mute" (Glidewell, 1986, p.109).

Abruptly deposited in the most sophisticated and developed society of America, the refugees were bewildered to discover their vulnerable status. Bearing the feelings of depression, helplessness, and hopelessness in an alien environment, their immediate reaction was solely suffering in silence. Psychologically, the gap between oneself and the wider society is too broad to have a bridge. A refugee's basic sense of identity grows out of this. He may first know himself through role taking and from the reflection of others. With profound vulnerability, he has a strong possibility of seeing himself devalued. The more he incorporates a negative image into his identity, the more he

will be devalued in his own image (Norton, 1986). The degree of incongruity between the societal systems of Vietnam and America is very likely to cause either identity conflict or identity confusion. Without a stable identity, the refugees no longer have enough strength to cope and the result is a breakdown of the coping structure in their new life in America.

In comparison with the Vietnamese traditional family, the general configuration of their refugee family system is undergoing a drastic change both in structure and in functioning.

The fact is that many Vietnamese families have been broken apart in fleeing to America. Many members have died or been separated. Even in the United States, many are scattered across the country. The traditional extended family is merely an image of the past. Since their arrival in America, under the increasing influence of Western individualistic values and norms, the Vietnamese family has slowly been eroding.

The father is no longer the breadwinner, thus his position as head of the household changed. The mother takes on even greater responsibilities in caring for the family. The grandparents are no longer “the wise” in the family; they feel left out and are unable to hold a reciprocal conversation with their grandchildren. The Vietnamese children’s space is extending further from the limitation of family and community. They find themselves exposed to a larger society other than the tightly locked family structure.

The function of the Vietnamese family reaches a turning point in this country, wherein, men and women are on equal footing. This is particularly difficult for most Vietnamese men who are used to having positions of status

over women. Whether he likes it or not, one way of living is over and a new way is emerging. The father cannot accept these changes. He feels threatened. He is no longer in the key power position. He has lost face and feels ashamed in the middle of a powerless position of the family.

A lack of trust develops between the husband and wife and conflicts break out between the generations. The structure which has always supported them begins to collapse and domestic violence is often the result (Aizawa et. al, 1983, p.14).

The clash of cultures as different as those of the American and the Vietnamese comes suddenly faster than the ability of the individual to adjust to the new way of living. Role expectations in the family are not consistent with the demands of practical circumstances. Typically, the husband tends to dwell on the past and is bound with stress and confusion, whereas, the wife appears to be more active, realistic in learning English and earning more than her husband.

The children's roles are speedily changing. They learn English, acquire new social skills and get along well with American way of living far quicker than their parents. Many of them become "spokesman" for their parents in dealing with the English speaking community. It is often pointed out that Vietnamese youth identity is split between two virtually opposite trends. On the one hand, their parents expect the young to maintain traditions and, on the other hand, they are culturally assimilated into the mainstream by interaction with their school and neighborhood peers. Maintaining a dual ethnic identity may create problems of identity conflict because the bearer

might not be accepted at home and will not be accepted readily at school. The dilemma for most Vietnamese refugee families is how to establish a middle path between two cultures by keeping what is most valuable from Vietnamese culture while adapting to the healthy characteristics of American culture. As this process proceeds, conflict occurs within multigenerational families. In one sense refugee children, like all children, want to be like everybody else; they want to fit in. They expect their parents to support them strongly in their new setting, yet they do not want to be like their parents, their elders who speak broken or no English, and hold onto old customs, failing to fit in as quickly as their children. Consequently, the more thorough the youngsters integrate into mainstream, the more conflict they have with their parents. Thus, at a time when communication is paramount, parents and children will literally, as well as figuratively, speak a different language (Riley, 1982). Generation gaps coupled with marital conflicts make their parenting problems more pronounced than those faced by other ethnic groups in the past.

Divorce used to be difficult to get in Vietnam. Separation and family breakdown were rare. It is evidently understandable because extended family and kinship systems are often very helpful to resolve conflicts and differences of a dysfunctional family. The absence of these supportive systems, along with role confusion in the new land, has led to increased family dysfunction among Vietnamese refugees.

The Vietnamese population in the United States comprise three generations: The Pre-Vietnam War (born before 1945), the Vietnam War (born between 1945 and 1975), and the Post-Vietnam War (born after 1975).

Directly or indirectly the Vietnam War has strong impact on the entire refugee population because they would not have arrived in the U.S. if it had not been for the war (Nguyen, 1998). In a psychosocial sense, Kiem Them (1999) suggested that every Vietnamese refugee belonging to the pre- and Vietnam War generations has exhibited at least a mild case of post-traumatic stress disorder because of their traumatic wartime experiences and intrusive memories during the Vietnam War. In the field of psychiatry today, among many names given to PTSD, “post-Vietnam syndrome” refers to mental and psychological problems caused by exposures to war-related events. Vietnam War veterans, ex-reeducation camp detainees, ex-boat people are war survivors who appear to be the most vulnerable refugees in face of PTSD.

In dealing with Western practitioners, Vietnamese refugees tend to understate problems. They are reluctant to open up, rarely express feelings, and are modest and discreet. Consequently, the findings of a number of studies have characterized them as being highly adaptable to the new culture. In reality, by contrast, many of them have been struggling in silence with the problems of identity and family crisis. Materially, there can be no denying that in America, the refugees have been enjoying a higher standard of living as compared to that of their homeland. Nevertheless, the percentages and tables given by some recent studies about Vietnam are far from reflective of the fact that the refugees are “walking wounded among us” because they have lost loved ones in war, exposed themselves during the war, suffered war aftermath, were dislocated at the middle age of life, and have been struggling to start their life from scratch in an alien social setting. They have gone through unimaginable horrors to

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reach America – the land of opportunity, but also a melting pot where their old identity, traditions, and social structures are in the process of increasingly changing as well as challenging.

The review of relevant literature in this chapter is aimed at (1) providing a better understanding of the historical and cultural background of Vietnamese refugees in the U.S; (2) exploring the impact of the Vietnam War on the psychosocial development of the refugee population; (3) discussing the cultural sensitivity that psychotherapeutic professionals should consider when contemplating providing services to Vietnamese refugee clients.

In psychotherapy, sensitivity to the culturally appropriate needs is crucial for effective service. To successfully accomplish the goals of providing adequate and culturally appropriate services, it is essential for psychologists and other professionals to understand the needs, backgrounds, beliefs, and desires of clients from different countries.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between Vietnam War-related experiences of the Vietnamese refugees and their adjustment in the United States. Furthermore, it is intended to gain a greater understanding of the specific impact the Vietnam War and the subsequent changes that occurred in Vietnam had on each group of refugees. To this end, a questionnaire has been used to collect data. The questionnaire was available in bilingual: English and Vietnamese. The study is exploratory and descriptive in nature combining the insight and observation of the researcher – a Vietnamese boat person – with the relevant literature and self-reports of respondents to a survey.

Relevant information will help enhance the understanding and differentiate myths from facts of the controversial Vietnam War and its long-term aftermath. As a result, service providers will better identify the issues confronting their refugee clients so that they can apply and implement more effective approaches. A better understanding of the problems that this population is undergoing would increase the effectiveness of and facilitate successful helping processes.

2. Design

The time perspective of the survey research was cross-sectional. Data were collected through administering questionnaires with the subjects at a single point in time.

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The questionnaire: A fourteen-page self-report was written in both English and Vietnamese. Attached to the questionnaire was a glossary to clarify the meaning of non-equivalent terms between English and Vietnamese that will be used in the questionnaire. The content of the questionnaire was objective, apolitical to avoid biases caused by ideological hatred, namely communism versus anti-communism. The means of inquiry was directly collected data obtained through mailed back questionnaires from research subjects.

Due to high demand on time, effort and resources, the questionnaire was conducted in Sacramento, Stockton, and San Jose, where approximately two hundred thousand Vietnamese refugees have been living since 1975.

The information was gathered by means of self-report, which could be defined as the subject's response to questions asked by the researcher. Data collected from surveys were primarily qualitative.

3. Subjects

The subject population for this study was made up of Vietnamese refugees taken randomly from all four different types of refugee: Seventy-Fivers, Boat people, Orderly Departure Program (O.D.P.), and Humanitarian Operation (H.O.)

The three selected sites would provide a general view of the refugee population as a whole. In Northern California, Sacramento, Stockton, and San Jose are home to all types of Vietnamese refugees. They comprise people of different age levels and have several cultural events every year. These communities provide the best coverage of the

survey population and permit more accurate generalization of the findings and inferences.

4. Instrumentation

The questionnaire was the main tool used to collect data. It was designed to be easily self-administered and consisted of three main parts and was available in both English and Vietnamese versions.

There three parts in the questionnaire set were:

1. The first part of the questionnaire was to gather demographic data.
2. The second part of the questionnaire was intended to gather data to identify the traumatic experiences in three phases of life:
 - In the Vietnam War and post-war Vietnam.
 - Escaping and in refugee camps.
 - Initial hardships of acculturation and social adaptation in the United States.

The questionnaire was to focus on the problems of adjustment in the new land: language, employment, identity, family functioning, and psychiatric problems (PTSD). The survey extended its inquiry to the past experiences that are likely to affect the adjustment of Vietnamese refugees into the mainstream and to different levels of adjustment among the four types of refugees.

3. The last part of the questionnaire was prepared to determine the mechanism and coping patterns used by the respondents in face of the new situation in this country.

Four hundred questionnaires were distributed to the

three main sites by regular mail (150), e-mail (100), and group mail (150). With e-mail and group mail, receivers were Vietnamese associations, organizations, clubs and their members. The employment of different mailing methods was based on the assumption that the potential respondents, who had experiences of mailing censorship in Vietnam, might have doubts on surveys conducted through the government post office system.

Forty-seven out of 400 subjects receiving questionnaires called and expressed their willingness to talk and share their views with the researcher. Interviews were conducted with twenty-five people who had participated in the survey. Of the twenty-five interviewees, eighteen were ex-detainees of re-education camps.

5. Data Collection

Because it was a quantitative study, the researcher anticipated the well-prepared questionnaire would result in a wealth of factual data that served as the foundation for answering the study's research questions.

Most of the data collection had focused on answering the major research questions:

“What is the impact of the Vietnam War and its aftermath on the adjustment process of the four major groups of the Vietnamese refugees in the United States?”

The hypotheses for this research study asserted that:

- 1. Exposure to the war and relocation as has a negative impact on the refugee population.
- 2. There is a positive relationship between the refugee's socioeconomic background in the country of origin and the level of acculturation in the host

society: The higher socioeconomic status people had in Vietnam, the greater their ability to integrate smoothly into the mainstream.

- 3. There is a difference in adjustment among the four groups: The Seventy-Fivers adjusted much better than the other groups due to their affluent, educated, and English-proficient background.

Although different techniques will be employed, the overall measured variables are prepared with general focus on four segments: (1) demographic information, (2) experiences of war and war aftermath, (3) experiences of refugeeism, (4) adjustment and coping in the United States.

6. Analysis

The data collected were of a qualitative nature. The qualitative data analysis in this study was primarily an inductive process of organizing the data into categories and identifying relationship between the Vietnam War and the adjustment of the Vietnamese refugees in the United States. This was a process of exploratory analysis for plausible explanations.

Data collected from questionnaires were managed and analyzed by both manual and computer-assisted methods. They were refined and organized from “raw” to a more abstract level. The technique of comparing and contrasting was used in practical and intellectual tasks during analysis to categorize data segments and identify similarities and differences between categories of known problems, perceived needs and unknown symptomatic developments and mismatch providing services between

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both the target population and the participating agencies.

The process for data analysis was divided into two phases: The first was the statistical component in terms of a frequency distribution outlining a client profile. Statistical techniques were utilized to calculate and describe mathematically the correlation among categories, frequency, and percentage. The second was a descriptive format. In this phase the descriptive analysis was presented to point out the significant relationship between past traumatic experiences and presenting stresses which impact identity, family functioning, psychosocial development among the Vietnamese refugee population during their eventual adjustment in the United States.

7. Pretest Refinement

The understandability and comprehensiveness of survey instruments are of crucial importance to minimizing the misunderstanding and misinterpretation from potential respondents. A pretest was designed to refine and revise the questionnaire and content of the interview.

The pretest procedures included three steps:

1. Participants: Five respondents for the questionnaire participated in the test. They were Vietnamese refugees not included in the sample population of this study. Their age, background, level of education and time of residency in the United-States were different from each other's age, background.
2. Understandability: The questionnaire was translated from Vietnamese into English and conversely by the researcher – a California State

Licensed translator – to make sure that all the “key words,” the special terms in the whole set of questionnaire, were understandable and acceptable to the respondents whose age, level of education, and background were different. The language and content of the questionnaire were tested and elaborated accordingly.

3. Amendment: With the feedback from the respondents after the test, the language and content of the questionnaire had been refined before the survey began. In dealing with the reality of Vietnamese communities in the US, where political issues such as pro-communist and anti-communist had become a main cause of friction and fragmentation, it was important not to mention the respondents’ politically sensitive points of view. Besides, inappropriate comments on religion and family business, husband and wife relationships might lead them to refuse to cooperate. A number of psychological terms in the Vietnamese version of the questionnaire translated from the English were changed into easy-to-know terms or phrases. The field reality appeared consistent with the anticipation that the more carefully the survey was prepared, the more cooperatively the subjects would respond in the process of the survey.

8. Limitations

More than a million Vietnamese refugees have come to the United States since 1975. This survey was conducted in Sacramento, Stockton, and San Jose in Northern California. The findings of this study research

was based on the collection of information of the limited sample study, so they might not be highly significant for making overall generalizations about the whole Vietnamese refugee population in the United States and around the world.

Stemming from past experiences in dealing with unjust authorities, the Vietnamese refugees had developed a strong sense of suspicion about questionnaires and interviews. For fear of being persecuted as frequently reminded by past traumatic experience, the refugees tended to withhold information that might have revealed their identities and their own opinions. By the same token, they might give answers to survey questions with the desire to please the questionnaire sender or the survey interviewer, whom they wrongly assumed to be an authority figure or an investigation-related person.

The linguistic problem coupled with the unfamiliarity of public opinion surveys compounded the difficulties for a formal survey in the Vietnamese refugee context. Many English terms did not have equivalent Vietnamese meanings; and numerous English words when translated into Vietnamese had very different meanings. Additionally, as a result of over 30 years of conditioning in a war-torn country in which the Vietnamese had been repeatedly exploited by corrupt officials who thrived on bribery under the masks of reports, paper work, and official procedures, the refugees tended to avoid any form of research questions into their family composition.

In summary, conducting a survey in the Vietnamese refugee population required not only the best possible preparation but also the flexibility, mutual respect, patience, caution, and especially cross-cultural

understanding of the survey conductor. Those refugees who had the same socioeconomic background and similar problems in common often clustered together in a certain area, so that research into the highly specialized problems was difficult because a sample of a few may not adequately represent a great many.

Rooted in the fear and suspicion of strangers and authority, some people might have a desire to ingratiate themselves by mentioning what they thought the questioner wanted to hear, not what the respondent really felt. Keeping this in mind, therefore, it was necessary to place a fair degree of confidence in the results, as long as the survey was conducted with caution to minimize the risk of misinterpretation in the gathering of information.

CHAPTER IV DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the survey data in this study is primarily based on univariate analysis of frequency distribution of the sample population. Descriptive statistics were used to present quantitative description in a manageable form of simple tables.

A demographic profile of the sample population provided the information on the general configuration of the Vietnamese refugees living in America, with particular emphasis on those in California and in other cities with a population of ten thousand or more.

The findings of this study were interpreted and analyzed in association to the refugees' personal and family characteristics, their existence in Vietnam, and their personal and family situation in the United States. The survey data helped identify and understand the historical background of their origin and their problems, their problem-solving capacities and self-determination, thus to perceive the strengths as well the potentialities of individuals, families, and groups.

Demographic Profile

Sex. There was a disproportionate distribution by gender in the sample population of this study. As shown in Table 4.1, 287 (84%) of the respondents were male and 55 (16%) of them were female (n = 342). The sex-role has been a major concern in the Vietnamese traditional families in which males were viewed as more suited for dealing with outside world.

Table 4.1 Gender Distribution
n = 342

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Male	287	84
Female	55	16

Age. Age of the survey population ranged from 26 to 75 and older years of age. Since the thirty- year Vietnam War was the time cornerstone for this study, the subjects were categorized into three generations. As indicated by Table 4.2, the vast majority of the Vietnamese refugees who were born between 1945 – 1975 belong to the Vietnam War generation (79%). The pre-Vietnam War generation was the second (15%), and the post-Vietnam War generation was the least (6%). This is consistent with the reality that during the 25 year history of the Vietnamese Refugee Grand Exodus (VRGE) the elderly often chose to stay behind with their ancestors and homeland while the younger generation assertively moved forward to a promising land and a better future (Truong, 1994).

Table 4.2 Generation Distribution

Age Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
25 – 28 Post war	21	6
29 – 55 Vietnam war	270	79
56 and over Prewar	51	15

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Marital Status. Three hundred and four (89%) of the respondents were married, but about two-thirds of them had spouses living together in the United States. Twenty seven (8%) of the married respondents had left their spouses behind in Vietnam. One out of thirty-five couples of pre- and Vietnam War generations and one out of eleven couples of post- Vietnam War generation were either separated or divorced (Table 1.3). Eighty percent of the interviewees stated that the main cause of divorce and separation was poor living conditions following the war and psychosocial dysfunction in the new society:

- In Vietnam, after 1975, separations and divorces happened mostly to couples with the husband being detained in the re-education camps over a long period of time. Family conflicts developed when the wife was found to have been disloyal during her husband's detention or when the husband was perceived by his wife as being incapable after coming home from the camps.
- In the U.S, family conflicts were usually consequences of husband and wife role reversal and American liberal lifestyle.

Table 4.3 Marital Status

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	27	8
Married	216	63
Separated / Divorced	27	8
Widowed	14	4
Spouse left behind	27	8

Divorce and remarried	31	9
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Household Composition. In the survey, the household composition was characterized by the household size.

- 1-2: Single – unrelated singles
- 3-7: Nuclear family
- 8-10: Extended family
- 11 or more: multiple families

The overwhelming majority of the subjects of the studied sample lived in nuclear families (72%). Table 4.4 shows the distribution of extended families and multiple families were the fewest (9% and 4% respectively). The traditional family structure has changed in contrast to a family unit in their homeland where the extended family is an essential part of the society's foundation. The new family configuration, with nuclear families significantly outnumbering extended families, reflects a new psychosocial challenge faced by Vietnamese refugees in the new land.

Table 4.4 Household Composition

Characteristic		Frequency	Percentage
1-2	single	151	15
3-7	nuclear	246	72
8-10	extended	31	9
11 or more	multiple	14	4

Religion. The Vietnamese, especially those who lived in the rural areas, were traditionally known as. That

religious pattern changed after the introduction of Buddhism and Christianity. The survey showed that 109 (32%) respondents were Buddhists. Catholics ranked the second in the studied population with 96 (26%) of the respondents. Forty-eight (14%) respondents practiced ancestral worship and were among those who claimed to be the Confucianists. Thirty-one (9%) were Christian. The interviewees stated that the majority of Christians were new converts after their arrival in America. Ten (3%) of the respondents were Cao-Dai and seven (2%) were Hoa Hao – the two popular religious sects in Southernmost Vietnam (Table 4.5). Observation noted that more than two-thirds of the population going to churches or temples regularly were middle-aged and older people.

Education. The collected data from the survey and interviews indicated the consistency that subjects from the “First wave – Seventy-Fivers” and the latest wave – commonly called “HO” (Humanitarian Operation) – were those who had the highest percentage of formal education in Vietnam. The interviewees who had attended schools and colleges indicated that there was a positive relationship between the educational background in Vietnam and the schooling performance in the U.S.

Table 4.5 Religion

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Ancestral worship	48	14
Buddhism	109	32
Catholicism	96	28
Christianity	31	9

Cao-Dai	10	3
Hoa Hao	7	2
None or others	41	12

Three hundred and eight (89%) of the sample population had received education from elementary level up to college level or higher. Two hundred and twenty-nine (67%) had gone beyond elementary school. In Vietnam, males were predominant at all levels of education. In the United States, there was equal opportunity for both males and females in education. In face of the language barrier, almost all interviewees and respondents stated that studying English must be the essential step before moving forward to the higher education or skill training. Seventy-five (22%) attended ESL programs only while 41 (12%) entered vocational training and 123 (36%) attended college. One-third of adult refugees received college or higher level of education in America; a high percentage as compared to 17 percent in Vietnam (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 Education

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
In Vietnam :		
None but literate	35	10
None and illiterate	3	1
Elementary (1-5 years)	75	22

Junior High (6-9)	96	28
Senior High (10-12)	75	22
College or higher	58	17
In the U.S.:		
None	41	12
ESL	75	22
Sometimes in school or college	62	18
Vocational training	41	12
1-2 years of College	65	19
4 years college or higher	58	17

Occupation and source of income. The survey results showed that 88 percent of the respondents held different kinds of employment in their homeland (Table 1.7). Stable living conditions and satisfactory occupations are the highest values of life in Vietnam.

The majority were fishermen and peasants (31%), or drafted servicemen (20%) during the war time.

Governmental employees (14%) were mostly public servants who served in the local and central administrative offices in Saigon or throughout South Vietnam. In the United States, by contrast, 123 (36%) of the sample were unemployed. Current unemployment rates varied somewhat depending on the previous occupation of the respondents: The more professional they were in their country of origin the better employment opportunity they obtained in the new land.

A great many of the respondents who had been the farmers, fishermen, and old-aged soldiers were living on

public assistance. Unskilled or less trained jobs such as gardening, newspaper delivery, and manicuring became attractive to the newcomers. The source of household income by working was 54 percent, while the rest of the sample population (46%) was economically dependent on different kinds of public as well as private assistance (Table 4.8). The general perception of “tax payer versus welfare receiver” had a profound impact on the refugees’ psychosocial development.

Those who were welfare dependents tended to hide their identity and, in several cases, isolated themselves from the working population. Thus, superiority complex versus inferiority complex caused emotional and psychological divisiveness among the refugee community members. To some extent, the people of similar socioeconomic status stick together and distance themselves from the people outside their circle.

Length of residency in the United States. By Vietnamese refugee standards, the level of success and adjustment is a positive relationship between the length of residency and parents’ achievement in business as well as children’s accomplishment in education. Thus, the longer time of residency, the better life is expected. With a 25 year history of resettlement in the U.S after the Vietnam War ended in 1975, the median length of time the refugees have been in the United States is 8 years. More than half of the sample (53%) had been in this country between five and fifteen years. Table 4.9 shows that 18 (5%) of the respondents are newcomers with a length of residence in the U.S less than a year. The vast majority of the sample are those who came to this country under immigrant status of “Boat people”, O.D.P (Orderly Departure Program), and H.O. (Humanitarian Operation: Ex- re-education camp

detainees). Among 61(18%) respondents who have been here more than fifteen years, fifty-six arrived in the U.S. in 1975. The general pattern of the Vietnamese adjustment over time can be observed in four stages: 1) The first few months: Social adjustment; 2) First and second year: Cultural adjustment; 3) After four or five years: Occupational and economic adjustment; 4) A decade or more later: Integration into mainstream.

Table 4.7 Occupation

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
In Vietnam:		
Unemployed	41	12
Self-employed	51	15
Public servant	48	14
Laborer, fisher, farmer	69	20
Professional	27	8
In the U.S:		
Unemployed, handicapped	123	36
Self-employed	34	10
Laborer	31	9
Professional	48	14
Odd job	27	8
Other	38	11

English Ability. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (60%) had no or limited English ability after 4 years living amidst the English-speaking society. Twenty-three (32%) of the sample had a reasonable grasp of the language with fair to good English. Only six (8%) of the respondents had an English ability at proficient level (good in writing, reading, and speaking). The responses to these close-ended questions could range from (1) none to (5) proficient as illustrated in Table 4.10.

Table 4.8 Source of Income

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Working	185	54
Public assistance	123	36
Unemployed insurance	3	1
Relative dependence	10	3
Other	21	6

Table 4.9 Length of Residency in the U.S.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Less than a year	18	05
1 year – 2 year	24	07
More than 2 years – 5 year	58	17
More than 15 years	61	18

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Table 4.10 English Speaking Ability.

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
None	76	22
Limited	96	28
Fair	92	27
Good	51	15
Proficient	27	8

Problem Identification

Traumatic Past

The Vietnamese refugee population in the U.S. comprises four major groups and some other insignificant sub-groups. This configuration reflected consistently the general population of the study as shown in the Table 4.11. The largest group of the respondents are the “boat people” (34%). The second largest group are the ex-detainees from the re-education labor camps. Seventy-fivers (16%) and O.D.P. (15%) groups make up less than one-third of the entire study subjects. A small number of respondents (6%) came to the U.S. before the fall of Saigon and yet called themselves refugees. Four were wives of former American servicemen or civilians working in war-related fields in South Vietnam during the war. Ten came to the U.S. as international students before 1975 and chose to stay. Five others migrated from France and Japan under the sponsorship of relatives or American agencies. Among

118 people of Group 2 (Boat people), only six respondents (5% of their group) are college graduates, but 87 (74%) are farmers or fishermen from rural areas of South Vietnam. By contrast, there are 18 college graduates (32% of their group) among 56 respondents of group 1. Twenty-two out of 27 interviewees contended that the more they experienced urban lifestyle in Vietnam the easier they adjusted into a new environment like America.

Interviewees who were combat soldiers in this study revealed that they lived and acted like “spontaneous crazy creatures” in the battlefields. They were powerless and powerful at times. They could have been killed any moment, but they could also have killed others with flimsy excuses. On a “killing field,” the exercise of anger management might be interpreted as “having low morale in fighting against the enemy,” a lack of determination, unacceptable to and punishable by military commanders.

Table 4.11 Immigration Status.

n = 342

Group	Type of refugees	Frequency	Percentage
1	“75” evacuees	56	16
2	Boat people	118	34
3	O.D.P	51	15
4	H.O	98	29
5	Others	19	06

Ninety percent of former combatants stated that in the absence of law, order, and other usual moral restraints, the egoism, amorality, and aggressiveness can be useful and valued in war conditions. A sadistic, egomaniacal, verbally abusive commander in war can possibly be the embodiment of military values and skills. Wartime activities are likely to create a moral dilemma for a caring person. In peacetime and totally remote from war-related dangers and stresses, such attendant feelings as guilt and shame begin to crop up in combat veterans' conscience. Psychological fragmentation and psychological stress have caused long-lasting negative effects on the psychosocial development of the refugees.

For many Vietnamese, life was a series of relocations with haunting pasts and uncertain futures. Panic evacuation from war zones was a traumatic experience.

Table 4.12 Living Areas in Vietnam
n = 342

Area	Number	Percentage
Peaceful rural	0	0
Peaceful urban	7	2
War related rural	222	65
War related urban	96	28
Other	17	5

Once relocated, war victims had to start all over their new life with empty hands and troubled minds. Two hundred and seventy-four (80%) of the sample had to

relocate from one to three times. Eleven (15%) have been relocated more than four times during the war (Table 4.13). The relocations impoverished and left the refugees with unhealed wounds in their prior to coming to America and other Western countries.

Table 4.13 Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Relocation
n = 342

Times Percentage	Frequency	
None	17	5
One	58	17
Two	144	42
Three	72	21
Four or more	51	15

Every walk of life in Vietnam was heavily impacted by the war. Both military people and civilians were exposed to the war repeatedly over thirty years of military conflicts. Only 27 respondents (8%), who were born after 1975, were not exposed to the war. The rest of the studied population (92%) experienced traumatic events of the war directly in battlefields or indirectly in fighting-related areas. As showed in the Table 4.14, the vast majority of the subject population had experienced multiple problems related to the war. War experiences of the respondents involved seeing people killed and wounded (82%) and undergoing repeated evacuations and relocations (82%). Witnessing property destroyed and damaged by the war (77%)

and fleeing fighting zones in panic (73%) were common among the studied subjects.

Table 4.14 Levels of Exposure to the War
n = 342

Level of exposure	Frequenc	Percentag
1. Served as a front line combatant	111	32
2. Served as a commander of	99	28
it		
3. Went on combat patrols	68	24
4. Attended to casualties	186	65
5. Was trapped in fighting area	215	75
6. Experienced destruction of	234	82
7. Was exposed to a high risk of	214	75
d		
8. Was wounded on a battlefield	84	29
9. Wounded in another fighting-	97	34
ation		
10. Was captured by enemy	52	18
11. Saw people killed and	279	98
12. Evacuated from fighting zone	224	79
13. Witnessed wounding or killing	187	66
ies		
14. Stayed in war refugee camps	199	70
15. Experienced evacuations and	234	82

Leaving the homeland was a measure of last resort to the Vietnamese, especially to peasants who had never dreamed of moving out of their ancestral native land. The relocation marked a turning point against their will. Even though there was no denying America had been a land of abundance and prosperity in the refugees' imagination, there are only thirty one respondents (9%) said they had wanted to come to America before 1975. Two hundred sixty-three (77%) had hardly desired to leave their homeland for America. Table 2.5 illustrates the statistical description of the willingness of living in America before 1975 among the sample population.

Table 4.15 Respondent's Willingness to Come to America before 1975
n = 342

Category label	Frequency	Percentage
Not at all	167	49
Little	96	28
Moderate	48	14
Much	17	5
Very Much	14	4

The fall of South Vietnam to the communists in 1975 and its aftermath have been a traumatic experience to every refugee. Thirty-four percent (118) of the studied subjects are "boat people," so called because they escaped from Vietnam by boat. Other types of refugees left Vietnam for America by regular means; however, they all stated that the sudden collapse of the South Vietnamese war machine

had shocked them deeply. Half of them, however, reacted to the takeover with a wait-and-see attitude. The rest simply ran for their lives in panic because they had personal experiences or learned from their close ones about atrocities the Vietnamese communists had committed against their fellow countrymen in “liberated zones.” Tens of thousands were killed during the time of land reforms in North Vietnam and thousands eliminated in Hue during the Tet offensive. Interviewees in the first wave and boat people said they fled the country for survival without knowing what the future would be. The subjects who had experienced real life under communist regime more than ten years said that the main reasons of their escapes or departures from Vietnam were because of lack of freedom, maltreatment by corrupt authorities, and a hopeless future for their children. Table 4.16 shows the two main causes of the refugee exodus are fear of communist reprisal (39%) and hope for a better life (44%). The panic evacuation was just happened to the subjects in the first wave (16%) shortly after the surrender of the South Vietnamese government. The family reunification has been a long-term exodus, which happened from a few months after the first wave of refugees to nearly twenty years following. The statistical number is still small (9%) but the trend is on the rise because the Vietnamese is the family-oriented people.

Table 4.16: Reasons for Escaping from Vietnam.
n = 342

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Panic	55	16

Fear of communist reprisal	198	58
To escape a hard life	58	17
Family reunification	31	9

In addition to the hard fate in their country of origin, the Vietnamese refugees' whole escape process was very traumatic. As shown in Table 4.17, only 3 (1.4%) out of 211 respondents of our sample population successfully escaped from their country without facing hardship and danger. The rest (98.6%) of the respondents actually faced multiple hardships including communist arrests, rough seas, pirate attacks, deaths of loved ones, or lack of food and water while escaping.

The periods of time spent by the respondents in the refugee camps while awaiting resettlement created extreme anxieties in many refugees. Lack of supplies coupled with strict screening process demoralized them and caused several cases of mental disorder. The average period of stay in the refugee camps is thirteen months (Table 4.17). Eight (11%) stayed in the camps up to 3 years and more. Only 3 percent of the respondents were in the camps for less than 4 months.

Table 4.17: Sufferings on the Way of Escaping.
n = 211

Category label	Frequency	Percentage
None	3	0.1
Enemies arrested and released	26	12
Storm ravaged	54	25

Pirate attacked	62	29
Pirate raped (Victim or witness)	26	12
Pirate tortured or killed boat fellows	58	27
Lack of food and water	197	93
Helpless broken boat	68	32
Lost direction	68	32
Betrayed or cheated by organizers	66	31
Loved one(s) died of hunger or attack	18	8
Rebellious teammates attacked each other	34	16
Loved ones missed during escape	14	7
Exploited by corrupted officials	172	82

Table 4.18: Time in the Camps.
n = 211

Time	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 30 days	0	0
1 – 4 months	5	2
5 – 11 months	52	25
1 – 2 years	75	36
3 –5 years and more	58	27
More than 5 years	21	10

Identity Problem

After arriving in the United States, the refugee had to give up some old habits and traditional values and

learned to adopt a new way of life. This emotional journey is the root of new direction and self-formation to the vast majority of the refugees. In this way each refugee individual becomes who he knows himself to be. The findings of our study indicated that many respondents are in quest for their identity. It is the conscious awareness on the values of the refugee oneness in contact with the mainstream and other ethnic groups.

Three hundred and twenty two (94%) of the sample population stated that they had never or rarely wondered “Who am I?” when they were still living in Vietnam, by contrast, 294 (86%) have very often or sometimes wondered the same question since living in the United States (Table 4.19)

To the refugee, bearing the Vietnamese identity in a pluralistic society like America means a hodgepodge of such feelings as inferiority, superiority, pride, shameful, confusion, discrimination and so forth as shown in the Table 4.20. In regard to ethnic identity, the number of respondents ranging between 21% and 71% were proud of their Vietnamese ethnic identity. In mentioning their social and individual identity, by contrast, they felt either confused or inferior because of the poverty, the backwardness of Vietnam and their current status as refugee in American society.

Two hundred and eighty (82%) of the sample population expressed their confusion in regard to their personal and family identity. The vast majority of the respondents were ambivalent between the feeling of pride (71%) and inferiority (39%) toward their Vietnamese identity. One hundred and twenty (35%) felt discriminated in comparison of their own identity to the other ethnic minority groups.

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This unclearly established identity took the risk of creating the negative impact on the process of adjustment in America.

Table 4.19: Frequency Distribution of Respondent’s Identity Awareness due to Relocation.
n =342

Location	Category label							
	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Very often	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Vietnam	219	64	103	30	17	5	3	1
U.S.A.	14	4	34	10	102	30	192	56

Family Functioning Problem

The findings indicated that the family unit is considered the most important retainer of cultural values and traditions to the Vietnamese. When these values and traditions are in process of changing under the new circumstances, the family functioning is inevitably affected.

Table 4.20 Respondents’ Attitude towards their Own Vietnamese Identity in America
n = 342

Feeling	Frequency	Percentage
Inferior	133	39
Superior	72	21

Proud	243	71
Shameful	27	8
Confused	280	82
Guilty	10	3
Hateful	10	3
Discriminated	120	35

None of our respondents' families remained unchanged since their arrival in America.

Table 4.21 showed that two hundred and nine (61%) of the sample population's family changed drastically. One hundred and six (31%) changed much or at a moderate level. Only 27 (8%) just changed a little.

Table 4.21 Change of Family in America.
n = 342

Level	Frequency	Percentage
None	0	0
Very little	27	8
Moderate	48	14
Much	58	17
Very much	209	61

In terms of change, the family problems included disrespect for family customs (*coù s*), changes in family roles, parent - child conflicts (*coù s*), wife - husband conflicts (*coù s*), and lack of understanding among family members. The changing configuration of family

functioning as shown in Table 4.22 created new social problems unparalleled in the Vietnamese societal setting.

One hundred and ninety-eight (58%) of the respondents faced the problem of disrespect for family customs. Two hundred and fifty seven (75%) of the sample population experienced change in family roles. One hundred and eighty five (54%) stated having parent - child conflicts, and 168 (49%) lacked understanding among family members during the last 12 months.

Table 2.12 Family Problems During the Last 12 Months.
n =- 342

Family Problems	Number	Percentage
Children’s disrespect for family rules	263	77
Change in family roles	325	95
Parent - child conflict	239	70
Wife - husband conflict	219	64
Lack of communication	277	81

The gap between expectations and realities in family functioning created different emotional reactions among our respondents. One hundred sixty eight (49%) of the respondents felt dissatisfied with their family functioning. One hundred thirty three (39%) felt satisfied or acceptable. Five (7%) were suffered by their family dysfunction (Table 4.23). Mostly likely these respondents, for the first time, experienced such problems as family breakdown, parent - child conflict, child runaway, child abuse, teenage pregnancy and so forth. The hierarchical

boundaries among the family members that used to be traditionally clearly defined in the Vietnamese societal setting have been changing in America. This changing configuration in family functioning was hardly avoidable in a series of relocations in which the recent flight to America has been a most striking turning point for the Vietnamese refugees. The traditional boundaries were broken apart due to the loss of social status of the husband, the role reversal of the wife in the family, the rapid Americanization of the children, and the generation gaps. Virtually every family of the Vietnamese refugees community was affected by drastic changes in every aspect of life. Cascades of rapid changes in their ways of life have resulted in emotional crises that left many families emotionally wounded and shocked.

The survey and analysis consistently affirms that the refugee families were all affected in some way by relocation.

Table 4.23 Respondents' Emotional Reaction to the Void between Expectation and Presenting Family Functioning.
n = 342

Feeling	Frequency	Percentage
Very satisfied	17	5
Satisfied	85	25
Acceptable	48	14
Dissatisfied	168	49
Suffering	24	7

Mental health problems

The Vietnam War has had long-term effects on the Vietnamese refugee population in general. Although more than two decades have passed since the hostilities ended, many refugees belonging to the Vietnam War generation continued to re-experience and suffer from their exposures to war, maltreatment, escapes, concentration camps, and refugee memories. Their losses of loved ones, social structures, and cultural traditions are significant and irreversible damages. These traumatic events may well have shattered the foundation of the refugee's psyche so severely that mental problems come as a result. The research findings show that insomnia, nightmares, anxiety, anger, depression, and loss of memory are common to those who are likely to suffer from Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Early symptoms of PTSD are widespread among the different refugee groups (Groups 2 and 4) composing those who exposed repeatedly to the Vietnam War and the post-war Vietnam. Eighty-two percent of "Boat people" (82%) and 93 percent (93%) of re-education camp ex-detainees (HO) experience loneliness while only 18 percent of "75" escapees and 22 percent of Orderly Departure Program (ODP) refugees do. Likewise, feelings of helplessness, loss of memory, loss of interest, loss of temper in Groups 2 and 4 are three or four times higher than Groups 1 and 3. Other Vietnamese people (Group 5) who were not the war victims experienced much less mental and emotional problems simply because they never or rarely exposed to the war (Table 4.24)

PTSD Assessment. In response to the inquiry on the PTSD test questionnaire as to whether any respondent experienced three or more out of nine categories of

personal problems, 254 (74%) checked “yes”. They were then referred to the PTSD assessment. The main tool of the assessment was derived from Watson’s questionnaire, which developed in accordance to DSM-IV Criteria for PTSD. The result shows that from 90 to 99 percent of the respondents experienced 10 out of 15 criteria for PTSD. Two hundred and fifty-one respondents (99%) suffered insomnia. Two hundred and forty-nine (98%) equally experienced flashbacks and fear of trauma returning. Hyper-alertness (91%), social isolation (94%), emotional numbing (94%) commonly occurred to the studied subjects. Twelve out of 15 interviewees who are ex-detainees of re-education camps claimed to be handicapped in learning and working due to their chronic depression. Trauma survivors are at risk of the secondary elaboration that leads to development of clinical depression. (Table 4.25).

Table 4.24 Personal Problems during the Last 12 Months
n = 342

Category	Distribution of Personal Problems among Groups									
	1(56)		2(118)		3(51)		4(98)		5(19)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Upset	18	32	62	53	21	41	72	73	03	16
Loneliness	10	18	71	82	11	22	91	93	06	32
Helplessness	17	30	94	79	27	52	77	79	04	21
Hatred of oth	12	21	23	19	11	22	31	32	03	16
Loss of mem	09	16	99	84	20	39	88	90	07	37
Loss of intere	10	18	10	86	23	45	87	89	09	48

Loss of temp	18	32	72	61	22	43	75	77	04	21
War nightma	35	62	10	89	41	80	93	95	02	11
Sleeplessness	10	18	72	61	29	57	92	94	02	11

f = Frequency x(y) = x: group; y = number

Almost all interviewees (10) who were former detainees of re-education camp stated that, many years after their release, they continue to be fearful for no reason, angry and resentful toward the lost war, sluggish at other times, easily tired and discouraged, and often haunted by the memories of their past ordeals. Eight out of that ten said they have been facing a present which is full of worries and missing the past, a past which doesn't let go, a future which promises all but old age and nursing home.

**Table 4.25 DSM-IV Criteria for PTSD, derived from Watson's Questionnaire
n=254**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
1 – B.1 Upsetting memories of the war frequently pushed themselves into my mind at times.	245	96
2 – B.2 I have had recurring unpleasant dreams about the war.	231	91
3 – B.3 Sometimes I acted or	221	87

felt as if the war was happening again.		
4 – B.4 Anything that reminded me of the war sometimes upset me a great deal.	248	98
5 – C.1 I avoided thinking about the war.	249	98
6 – C.2 Sometimes I avoided activities or situations that reminded me of the war.	199	78
7 – C.3 Sometimes I couldn't remember important things about the war.	229	90
8 – C.4 I have lost a lot of interest in things that were very important to me before the war.	240	94
9 – C.5 I have felt more cut off emotionally from other people at some period than before.	241	94
10 – C.6 There have been times I felt that I did not express my emotions as much or as freely as I did.	241	94
11 – C.7 There have been periods I felt that I won't have much of a future – that I may not have a rewarding career, a happy family, or a long, good life.	244	96
12 – D.1 I had more difficulty falling as sleep or staying as sleep at times.	251	99
13 – D.2 I have got irritated or lost my temper more at times.	239	94

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14 – D.3 There were periods I had more trouble concentrating.	224	88
15 – D.4 There were times I was more overtly alert, watchful, or super-aware of menacing noises than before.	231	91

Past traumatic experience and adjustment problems

The Vietnamese refugee population in America comprises people of all social classes and socioeconomic backgrounds in their country of origin. The research findings show that levels of adjustment depends considerably on past experiences, education, socioeconomic backgrounds, and coping skills in the new situation.

Adjustment problems of the refugees are often perceived by the mainstream as refugee behavior or refugee problems because the longer they integrate into the mainstream the more deviant, isolated, and non-recurring they seem to be in the view of the host society. Adjusting process has occurred since the newcomer set foot on the new land; however, levels of adjustment are varied from one person to another depending on several factors. Besides, refugees are also a social psychological type whose behavior is socially and culturally patterned.

By using Likert Scales, the survey results show that there is a strong link between the language, education, socioeconomic background of the refugees in their home country and their success or failure in the host country. All five groups in the survey strongly agreed that English (OAS=1.20) and Education (OAS=1.18) play a main role for their success in the new society (Overall scores: 1.20

and 1.18 respectively). Overall scores are ranging from “Agree” to “Neutral” according to the respondents’ opinion that urban experience (OAS=2.00), socioeconomic background (OAS=2.44), and material resource (OAS=2.22) are contributive factors that help refugees succeed in the new land (Table 4.26)

Table 4.26 Link between Language, Education, Socioeconomic Background and Success
n = 342

Category	Group										OAS	
	1(56)		2(118)		3(51)		4(98)		5(19)			
	S	A	S	A	S	A	S	A	S	A		
English	62	11	15	13	67	13	10	11	11	21	12	1.20
Education	68	12	13	19	59	11	11	12	24	12	12	1.18
Urban experience	80	14	27	27	93	18	17	18	51	27	20	2.00
Wealth	11	21	23	21	12	24	25	26	37	19	22	2.22
Socio-economic class	13	24	25	22	13	26	27	28	42	22	44	2.44

Legend: S = Score; A = Average; OAS = Overall Average Score

Scoring scale: 1 = Strongly agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = disagree; 5 = Strongly disagree

Resettlement, adjustment, acculturation, and assimilation are a complex, multifaceted process. The general pattern of refugee adjustment over time can be observed in chronological order: Sheltering adjustment, occupational and economic adjustment, cultural adjustment, and psychological adjustment. To the Vietnamese refugees, psychological adjustment is the most complicated process because it persistently relates to past traumatic experiences of the war and its aftermath.

Table 4.27 shows that group 1 (Boat people) and group 2 (Ex-prisoners of labor camp) strongly agreed (S=1.3 and S=1.0) that exposures to the war caused a strong impact on their adjustment problems. By contrast, the group 1 (75 evacuees) and those who were not exposed to the war (Group 5) responded either “neutral” or “disagree” (S=3.4 and S=3.9) about the impact of the war and its aftermath on their adjustment in the new environment (Table 4.27)

Table 4.27 Exposures to the War and Psychosocial Adjustment Problems.

n = 342

Category	Group										O A S
	1(56)		2(118)		3(51)		4(98)		5(19)		
	S	A	S	A	S	A	S	A	S	A	

Memories of the war	7 2	1. 2	1 4 3	1. 2	6 7	1. 3	1 0 1	1. 0	5 6	2. 9	1. 4 8
Lasting pain of loss	6 6	1. 2	1 3 1	1. 2	5 9	1. 1	1 0 4	1. 1	6 1	3. 2	1. 5 6
Unhealed wounds	7 7	1. 4	1 9 8	1. 7	1 0 1	2. 0	1 0 2	1. 0	5 9	3. 1	2. 0 0
Maladjustment	1 9 1	3. 4	1 5 9	1. 3	8 4	1. 6	1 0 0	1. 0	7 4	3. 9	2. 2 4
Impaired self-image	1 7 2	3. 1	1 7 7	1. 5	1 1 1	2. 2	1 7 2	1. 6	6 9	3. 6	2. 4 0

Legend: S = Score; A = Average; OAS = Overall Average Score

Scoring scale: 1 = Strongly agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Disagree; 5 = Strongly disagree

Re-education camps and refugee camps apparently had a pathological effect on the mental health of the refugees. The ex-detainees of both refugee and re-education camps strongly agreed that they had suffered sleeping difficulties (S=1.60 and S=1.0), flashbacks (S=1.4 and S=1.1), emotional shutdown (S=1.5 and S=1.1), impaired functioning (S=1.8 and S=1.3). The respondents who did not experience the camp situation remained neutral (S>3.0) or nearly disagreed (S>3.5) on the statement that their past traumatic had caused a negative impact on their mental health and adjustment to the new life (Table 4.28)

Eighteen out of 25 interviewees (72%) stated that not only had they endured the sufferings in Vietnam, but they are still burdened by a past which refuses to be forgotten. Ten of them often dreamed of return and revenge. Twenty-one (84%) [said they] strongly agreed that the traumatic past and associated mental health problems are a major barrier that has pulled the refugees backward and weighed them down in the adjustment process.

Table 4.28 Past Traumatic Experiences and Mental Health, PTSD

n = 342

Category	Group										OAS
	1(56)		2(118)		3(51)		4(98)		5(19)		
	S	A	S	A	S	A	S	A	S	A	
Sleeping difficulties	150	27	17	15	77	15	10	10	61	32	1.98
Flashbacks	112	20	16	14	82	16	18	11	57	30	1.96
Emotional shutdown	172	31	17	15	99	19	16	17	52	27	2.18
Fear, anxiety, anger	154	26	15	13	128	25	15	12	59	31	2.14
Impaired	22	36	24	11	11	25	11	11	66	33	2.5

d functio ning	0 2	6	1 1	8	4 0	. 7	2 3	3	6	5	8
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Legend: S = Score; A = Average; OAS = Overall Average Score

Scoring scale: 1 = Strongly agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Disagree; 5 = Strongly disagree

Stress and Coping

Being sentimental by nature, the Vietnamese tend to live with the past when facing a dissatisfying situation in their adopted country. Beset by resentment of the past, frustration of the present, and uncertainty of the future, the refugee was overburdened with multiple stresses. Thus, the more severe the past traumas associated with the war, the stronger the sense of alienation and disappointment in the new environment.

Over the long years living under the war, the Vietnamese had endured all kinds of hardships with the hope of having a better future; therefore, there is no doubt that when the refugees first arrived in America, their minds were filled with rising expectations. The unqualified optimism and hope they had cherished about a promising America – the land of opportunity, of milk and honey – did not go unchallenged. Facing with unexpected psychological hardships and social barriers, the newcomers, especially those who came to the US under “free case” status with no relative sponsors upon their first arrival, often complained about having a general feeling of frustration, failure, loneliness, and general depression.

Nearly all pre-War and War generation interviewees claimed that the language barrier is the most stressful of the problems facing the refugee.

A respondent stated that changing the way people speak since birth is like changing a stream's flow. Another interviewee said that the refugee's future hinges on the ability to speak English properly. Five formally-educated interviewees indicated that the English language that they had learned in Vietnam was mainly for reading and writing, not for speaking.

Collected data showed that language is the most common problem facing the new arrivals. **Difficulties caused by** lack of resources and marketable skills, coupled with many other barriers in language and in culture, created multiple stresses on the refugee. Three hundred and thirty five (98%) of our respondents **cited the language barrier as their toughest problem**. Two hundred and fifty (73%) were faced with unemployment. Two hundred and twenty nine (67%) experienced some kinds of discrimination in America. Two hundred and thirty nine (70%) **presented problems caused by cultural disparities**. One ninety five (57%) had the problem of family conflict, and half of the sample population stated that their identities were unstable or they had conflict in the process of acculturation (Table 4.29). Two hundred and ninety nine (87%) experienced mental problems from mild level to serious. At this point, the assimilation of the refugee remains a long shot because of vast cultural differences between the host society and the new comer. As a consequence of multiple problems facing the refugees in the new land, the adjustment process has been slow and uphill.

Among those common problems faced by the refugee in America, our findings showed that the sense of

identity and family functioning were the factors most likely to affect the refugee's trauma. The Vietnamese refugee traditionally places strong emphasis on the "good name" which closely relates to their individual and social identity. A major change in socioeconomic status and failure to adapt to the new society may well lead the refugee to a state of identity conflicts. In other words, they may think they lose face due to their vulnerabilities on a new territory. This sentiment badly hurts their self-esteem and has become unbearable to the vast majority of the Vietnamese refugees. As can be seen in Table 4.30, only 31 (9%) of the total respondents felt at ease with their own identity in contact with the mainstream.

Table 4.29 The most Common Problems Faced by the Respondents in America.
n = 342

Problem	Number	Percentage
Language	335	98
Unemployment	250	73
Cultural mismatch	308	90
Discrimination	229	69
Environmental conflict	171	50
Family conflict	195	57
Identity confusion	251	73
Mental problems	299	87

The results of our study showed the great burden the refugee felt when he was unable to take care of his family or failed to maintain family functioning properly.

Eighteen (72%) of twenty- five interviewees stated that their greatest concern in regard to the family functioning was how to maintain the traditionally defined boundaries among family members. They do not want their children either totally Americanized or fully maintaining the Vietnamese way of life in America. Similarly, two hundred and seventy-seven (81%) of our sample population indicated that they want to see their children getting along well with American culture in the dominant societal context but still retaining the Vietnamese identity within the family. Table 4.30 illustrates the statistical description of the perception of the family functioning among the sample population.

Table 4.30 Response to the Question: “How at ease do you feel with the American culture?”
n = 342

Category label	Number	Percentage
Not at all	55	16
Little	157	46
Moderate	99	29
Much	17	5
Very Much	14	4

In reality, however, the expectation of children to function harmoniously with the dual identity is far from being fulfilled. The disappointment of expectation is most likely to heighten the inner conflicts in the family. The emotional separation of family members, the disrespect

caused by Americanized children are stress - related factors which have been the root of family crisis.

Coping approaches

Because of the vast differences in culture between Vietnamese refugees and Americans, the acculturation process of the Vietnamese was not going on smoothly. They often arrived ignorant of American culture and speaking only their mother language. The Americanization of the children usually create conflicts between them and their parents; and the modernization of the wife may bring about a relationship breakdown. Consequently, the conflicts between traditional Vietnamese values and American freedoms have contributed to pull the refugee's family apart.

In coping with the problems, the findings of our study indicate that the respondents typically sought help to alleviate their stresses from four main resources: (1) by themselves, (2) within their own family, (3) among close relatives and friends, (4) from outsiders.

**Table 4.30 What the Respondents Want Their Children to Be?
n = 342**

Category label	Number	Percentage
Totally Americanized	14	4
Totally Vietnamese	14	4
Half and half	277	81

Whatever they want to be	27	8
No idea	10	3

In the absence of the mutual support of an extended-family system, kinship network, and village environment, the refugees have to primarily rely on themselves in problem solving. In this self-help process the refugee tends to hold to his traditional values, practice his own philosophy of living in coping with unprecedented situations such as racism, discrimination and the like.

Tables 3.4 and 3.5 illustrate the reactions of the respondents in case of facing with racism or discrimination.

Two hundred and fifty seven (75%) of the sample population ignored those who publicly looked down on them because of the ethnic identity. Fifty-eight (17%) found the cause and removed it. Seventeen (5%) scolded the insulters. Likewise, One hundred and thirty-seven (40%) of the total respondents stayed away from a neighbor who repeatedly showed discrimination against them. One hundred and twenty-seven (37%) ignored their racist neighbor. Fifty-eight (17%) moved to another location. Only ten (3%) looked for help from the police and three (1%) confronted the neighbor.

Table 4.32 Respondents' Reaction to the Racists
n = 342

Reaction	Number	Percentage
Ignore	257	75
Find the cause and remove it	58	17
Scold them	17	5

Hit them	3	1
Make friend with them	7	2

Table 4.33 Respondents' Reaction to a Neighbor Who Repeatedly Shows Discrimination against Them
n = 342

Reaction	Frequency	Percentage
Ignore	127	37
To be friendly with him	7	2
Stay away from him	137	40
Look for the help of police	10	3
Confront him	3	1
Move to another location	58	17

With respect to family rules and social norms, the Vietnamese are traditionally very strict with a woman who is unfaithful to her husband or with a child who strikes or insults his parents. This concept of familial hierarchy, however, surrenders to the different value system of the host society. Our study surprisingly finds out that compliance with local law or respect for authority is quickly adopted by the refugees. The helpless refugee is quickly responsive to the authority in an attempt to restore his life to normal because he perceives that compliance with local law and order is necessary for success in industrialized and mechanized America.

The head of household, often a father, always finds a need to maintain self control and avoid getting into disputes likely to lead to any brush with the law of the main

stream society. By and large, the Vietnamese refugees in America have adopted new approaches to coping with family problems. To an unfaithful woman or a disobedient child, for example, the punitive measures applied are no longer the same as in Vietnam. Table 4.34 shows the course of action a Vietnamese in America may take in case he is betrayed by his spouse. Over three quarters of the total respondents of our sample favored peaceful ways to solve the problem. Only thirty-seven (11%) would utilize similar ways as used in Vietnam to solve the problem.

Table 4.34 What Should be Done for an Unfaithful Spouse?
n = 342

Action	Frequency	Percentage
Ignore	10	3
Find the cause and remove it	116	34
Forgive and love him/her more	14	4
Educate or advise him/her	116	34
Scold him/her	27	8
Turn him/her out of home	49	14
Beat him/her	10	3

The Vietnamese are a family-oriented people. The enormous power of the family over the individual is a fact of life within the social environment. Parents are willing to sacrifice their own well-being for the welfare of their children as a matter of course. In return, children are expected to unquestioningly respect, love and obey parents. Nevertheless, many children in America have adopted a

spirit of personal freedom and individualism hardly acceptable to and sometimes unbearable to their Vietnamese elders. In terms of coping with child deviancy in America, our survey indicates that most parents have tried their best to avoid corporal punishments or verbal lashings such as whipping, scolding, rejecting, probating, kneeling and the like –punitive measures of discipline acceptable in their old country. This implied their compromise to the law of majority. Table 4.35 illustrates the coping patterns of Vietnamese parents toward their misbehaving children.

The significant figure in this table is that three-quarters of the sample population stated they should find the cause to remove it or either educate or advise a child who breaks the family rules. One hundred and ninety-two (56%) of the total respondents would find the cause to remove it or either educate a child who strikes or insults parents. Only around ten percent of the sample stated that they possibly apply similar measures of punishment as used in Vietnam on their misbehaved children.

Table 4.35 Respondent's Coping Approaches to a Misbehaved Child.
n = 342

Category label	Break family		Insult parent	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Ignore	51	15	7	2
Find the cause and remove it	51	15	86	25
Forgive and love him/her	27	8	3	1
Educate or advise him/her	131	38	106	31

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Scold him	27	8	27	8
Beat him	10	3	41	12
Turn him out of home	45	13	72	21

Utilization of Services

By whatever way available in coping with the problems of personal and ethnic identity and family functioning in America, our survey indicates that Vietnamese refugees relied mostly on themselves or family and underutilized public services.

One hundred and 68 (49%) of the respondents in our study stated that they basically tried to solve the problems by themselves. One hundred and two (30%) of the sample group sought help from family and relatives. Thirty-four (10%) utilized services from social service agencies. Only twenty-seven (8%) of the total sample population sought help from sponsors. Table 4.36 shows statistical information about the utilization of helping resources.

Table 4.36 Respondents' Utilization of Helping Resources
n = 342

Helping resources	Number	Percentage
None	14	4
Yourself	168	49
Family and relative	75	22
Sponsor	27	8

Social agencies	34	10
Religious leaders	24	7

Unlike other immigrant from technologically developed countries, the Vietnamese in general are very unfamiliar with Western concepts and treatment modalities. Helping services such as family therapy, family counseling, consultation are things alien to them. Sharing individual or family problems with any person other than family members, close relatives and friends rarely occurs.

Even in America, a strong sense of suspicion still persists among the refugees toward the outsiders. As seen in the Table 4.37, 277 (81%) stated that they only discussed their difficulties with the family. One hundred twenty (35%) with friends while only 41 (12%) stated that they discussed openly their difficulties with social workers, and 17 (5%) with strangers.

Table 3.9 Frequency Distribution of Respondents Discussing the Difficulties with their Own Groups and Outsiders.
n = 342

Objective label	Number	Percentage
Family	277	81
Friend	120	35
Relative	147	43
Social worker	41	12
Religious leader	17	5
Stranger	1	5

Summary

A profile of the demographic characteristics of the sample population was generally presented in the beginning of this chapter. Such variables as sex, age, marital status, household, education, language... revealed a general picture of the sample population. Virtually all respondents in the study are the Vietnamese refugee adults who are currently heads of household or function as heads of household. These people had been victims of a long war and experienced a series of relocation. In America, a large proportion of the sample group have been facing adjustment problems due to past traumatic experiences under a thirty year Vietnam War and the post-war Vietnam. Repeated exposures to the war and its aftermath, the Vietnamese refugees have been at high risks of mental health problems, PTSD, identity crisis, and family dysfunctioning. The lack of a clear self-identity and a strong ethnic identity has created an inferiority complex among Vietnamese emigrants. Thus, there is a stigma attached to the refugee status. Additionally, the role change in family functioning has created gaps between parents and children and breakdowns in husband-and-wife relationships. Most respondents would agree that these experiences and problems contribute to stresses they undergo in striving to start a new life in America. The study is consistent with previous findings in support of the hypotheses that:

1. Exposure to the war and relocation as a consequence of the war caused a negative impact on identity and family functioning among the Vietnamese refugees.

2. There is a strong link between socioeconomic, education background in the country of origin and the adjustment in the host society: The higher standing in education and socio-economy in Vietnam, the better chance to adjust smoothly and be successful in America.

Many of respondents in the study stated that they essentially relied on themselves and their own groups in effort to overcome their problems with little confidence and uncertain outlooks for their future, especially in dealing with mental health-related issues. Since mental problems are considered as a stigma of foolishness or craziness in Vietnamese culture, most interviewees who have been on SSI (Social Supplemental Income) for mental disability never sought help from professional mental health practitioners or public mental health service providers.

To neutralize this negativism and to offer a more positive alternative, it is imperative to establish more well-defined and more well-organized programs in providing services to disadvantaged refugees in need.

Generally, Vietnamese refugees have high expectations about their new life in America especially in terms of economic and occupational improvement. Elderly respondents tend to pin their hope of family successes on their youngsters; they reason that they would not have fled Vietnam if it had not been for the future of their children.

Vietnamese refugees often have reservations about agencies set up to help them due to past experiences of adversities and injustices they suffered at the hands of corrupt officials in Vietnam. Findings of this research might provide a deeper and broader view of the Vietnamese refugee's past and current problems and their actual needs. This is potentially to help relieve the sufferings of the

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refugees and assist those who try to give support to the Vietnamese refugees.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusive summary

The study was designed to focus upon the long-term impact of the Vietnam War and its aftermath on the adjustment process of the Vietnamese refugees in the United States. It has hypothesized that the more the people were exposed to the war the more they would experience adjustment problems in the host country.

The research further explored the relationship between the socioeconomic background of the refugees in their homeland and adjustment level in the new society.

The survey and interviews were conducted among Vietnamese refugees mostly living in Northern California. However, Vietnamese refugees, as a whole, share common factors in culture, in historical background, and in resettlement experiences. They are a family-village-oriented people who bear the peculiar scars of war, post trauma, and forced relocation, often without family or relatives.

The literature review and data analyses stated that the Vietnam War has had long –term effects on the people who were exposed to the war repeatedly. Many refugees, who had left Vietnam shortly after the end of war or later, continued to re-experience and suffer from the war. Although more than two decades have passed since the war ended in 1975, traumatic memories of war horrors, casualties, losses, forced labor, escape, concentration camps are still vivid in hearts and minds of the Vietnam

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war survivors.

Vietnamese refugees in America are very different from traditional refugees. The new refugees are culturally, racially, and ethnically vastly different from their hosts. Many of the refugees have experiences and skills that produced prominence of success in Vietnam but which will not transfer well to an urban technological society as in North America.

Viewed as a psychological substitute for their long-term suffering, the refugee's expectation of a wonderful life in the land of opportunity is often romantic and unrealistic. But their overwhelming optimism gradually faded away in the face of the hard reality that America is best suited only for those who are well-prepared and readily skilled for marketable competition. Unfulfilled high expectations often have a large impact on their behavior and adjustment. In several instances, the disillusionment coupled with identity confusion, language difficulties, cultural barriers, isolation, host hostility and countless other factors add to the pressures on the refugees in a strange land.

Findings related to refugee mental health indicate that forms of depression included emotional outbursts of anger, restlessness, confusion, grief, pity, despair, and psychosomatic symptoms are very common among those who repeatedly exposed to the war and detained in the re-education camps over a long period of time.

Cultural differences, language and communication difficulties, the trauma of exposing to the war, losing one's homeland and roots, uncertainty about the future, and unavailability of jobs have been the common etiologic factors causing negative impact on mentality, identity, and adjustment among Vietnamese refugees in America.

Psychologically, the refugees felt there was a strong stigma attached to their ethnic identity when their value system became useless or even contradictory with that of the mainstream. “As people lose the things that have meaning for them, there’s a quiet dying that goes on inside. The distinction between being alive and dead is not always a very big one.” (Loveridge, 1987, p. 19)

Under the new circumstance in America, the Vietnamese are a minority of minorities. Besides the suffering, trauma, persecution already endured, the refugee must face up multiple negative feelings such as anxiety, fear, frustration, and emotional disturbance. Whether the refugee wants it or not, his individual, family and social identity is in the process of change. The speed of this process may vary greatly from one person to another, but the formation of a new identity is inevitable. Our study concluded that any person who either attempts to stand against this unavoidable transformation or hurriedly rejects his primary identity to blindly Americanize will run the risk of identity crisis that eventually lead to maladjustment into the mainstream.

The findings of the study also implied that there is a positive relationship between the sense of identity and family. Dysfunctional family is caused by lack of a clear self-identity, husband-wife role reversals and parent-child conflict. Changing relationships are the common factor eroding the solidarity of the Vietnamese family structure. Consequently, a large number of the refugee families were either broken down or dysfunctional. To a large extent, the family is no longer a “warm nest” as it used to be but a social problem or a burden of public welfare. In order to help the newly arrived refugees cope with the earlier mentioned problems, various agencies, organizations, and

associations have made different efforts to settle and assist the refugees soon become familiarized with their new life in America. However, the results were far from being satisfactory to many of the refugees who are in dire need.

It would be misleading to quote a single rate of success, a single figure of accomplishment gained by a group or individuals of the most advantaged refugees as a means of generalizing the changing configuration of the entire refugee population. As a matter of fact, those with little education and who held low status or skill occupations in Vietnam are much less likely to be more advantaged refugees. This presents a paradox: it makes sense to provide the services to those best prepared to make good use of them; yet this pattern of use will hasten the adjustment of the more advantaged, leaving the less advantaged refugees to their own devices. (Caplan et al., 1985).

In recent years, the success of Vietnamese groups has gained public visibility. However, while a number of groups and individuals in Santa Ana, San Jose, Los Angeles, and Houston rise to the top with national recognition for their outstanding success, a sizeable proportion of the Vietnamese population in the big cities of the United States, particularly in California, are still burdened with a high rate of dependency, high unemployment, and living below the poverty line.

Approximately 46 percent of the respondents are still living on some kinds of cash assistance. Economic dependency undoubtedly damages pride and self-esteem of the refugees and leads to the confusion in their adjustment process. Dependent economic status is traditionally considered as a sign of incapability of the father in a Vietnamese family. This is a disgrace for the family and,

in several instances, causes couple and family breakdown.

In face of identity, mental health and family problems, the policy implementation of providers, the availability of community resources, and the utilization of current social services are of crucial importance to the disadvantaged refugee.

Recommendations

On the way of integration into the main stream, the refugee's personal adjustment is the primary step that can either aid or hinder the long-run process. The host-refugee relationship is essential to foster a smooth personal adjustment, but not an easy one. In the U.S. despite the use of sponsorship technique, few personal friendships are formed. In face of a less friendly atmosphere, the refugees who are in defense of their identities and avoid losing face, are highly critical of the host culture and new surrounding environment. In order to help facilitate adjustment, it is recommended that the service providers working with Vietnamese refugees focus mainly on three issues that effect the refugee population the most: Financial dependency, mental health, and social service underutilization.

Many Vietnamese refugees begin their American lives on some form of public cash assistance. For most, getting off such assistance is a gradual process. In the process, several refugee programs are increasingly employed to facilitate the resettlement of refugees and to ease their initial adjustment to the United States. The Refugee Act of 1980 formalized the federal government participation in serving the refugees through the Office of

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Refugee Resettlement, Department of Health and Human Services.

Included under support services are employment services, English as a Second Language programs (ESL), vocational training, orientation and other social services.

According to the recent evaluations based on comparison between the enormous effort of those refugee programs involved and the self-sufficiency of the refugees, the effectiveness of service implementation appears to be insignificant.

To overcome the obstacles of irrelevant programs and services targeted to the Vietnamese refugees, it is necessary to place strong emphasis on refugees' strategies for attaining self-sufficiency and technique of handling the helping services.

Policy implementation for attaining self-sufficiency

Before arriving in the United States, almost every Southeast Asian refugee in the refugee camps had the presumption that they could use their strong will to regain a meaningful, dignified and independent life in their new homeland by their own physical and spiritual strength. According to their traditional norms, living on the others' energy is immoral, guilty and unworthy. Even to the poor, alms-house or public assistance was very alienated to them. Beggars were considered as the half-dead.

The reality in America shocked them profoundly, particularly in terms of public assistance. The social figure of millions of the African Americans, Hispanic, poor white

... who were born and grew up in this country for generations but still living on welfare, made the Southeast Asian new arrivals quickly change their mind from the active mood to the passive mood. It is very likely that “no body would work for a wage if he could make a living by doing nothing.” Likewise, living on welfare appeared to be the easiest way for the unskilled refugees in America. The following are suggested ways of making services more effective.

Numerous federal, state, and local training programs under the management of hundreds of MAAs (Mutual Assistance Agencies) nationwide, which applied mostly to the Southeast Asian welfare recipients, are persuasive evidences of the lack of an effective solution to improve the current welfare state in our country in general, and to help the Vietnamese refugees become self-sufficient in particular. The following are suggested ways of making services more effective.

1. In order to create a “greater avenue of independence” for the Southeast Asian AFDC (Aid to Family with Dependent Children, a former name of current CAL-WORK Program in California), SSI (Supplemental Security Income), CAPI (Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants) clients, it is suggested that the policy makers and persons in charge of policy implementation have a special focus on this population. As the exploited, the oppressed, and the uprooted during the 30 years of a merciless war, the Vietnamese are hard working people who had the potential ability to adapt to the different circumstances for being self-sufficient. They really need a fishing rod to catch the fish rather than the fish itself. People tend to take

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advantage of easy way to survive but that will gradually lure them into idleness and dependency.

2. A healthy public cash assistance program must be viewed as a transitional bridge for the new arrivals. Any attempt to prolong the existence of dependent status will inevitably lead to the disruption of social and spiritual perspectives of the economically dependent refugees.

3. In the field of social policy, a good policy itself is inadequate. Rather, the policy implementation is the central power to make a program successful. Therefore, reciprocal understanding and mutual support between the providers and the beneficiaries are strongly recommended.

Cultural awareness in policy implementation

According to the U.S. Surgeon General's 1998 Report on Mental Health, "research documents that many members of minority group fear, or feel ill at ease with, the mental health system. These groups experience it as the product of white, European culture, shaped by research primarily on white, European populations. They may find only clinicians who represent a white middle-class orientation, with its cultural values and beliefs, as well as its biases, misconceptions, and stereotypes of other cultures." (p.11)

Throughout the last decade, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees have been helped by various agencies, therapists, counselors, social workers. However, to a large extent, the services have not adequately responded to the special needs of the served population or have been inappropriate and ineffective due to the lack of

cultural sensitivity and coping skills of the indigenous Western styled practitioners. Cultural insensitivity associated with erroneous assumptions of the service providers about the real needs, the expectations, and the actual problems of the new arrivals are often exacerbated by the communication difficulties and misinterpretation between service providers and receivers. To enhance effectiveness in utilizing the technique of handling the Vietnamese refugees, psychotherapeutic empathy, innovative social work practice should be implemented in this refugee population to provide more accessible, appropriate, and acceptable services with special focus on solving the problems of identity crisis, mental health and family dysfunction. Thus, facilitate adjustment and maximize effectiveness of helping process.

1. We strongly recommend that the ethnic and personal identity be enhanced and promoted. A sense of pride in the former culture will help a refugee feel good about himself and feel proud of being Vietnamese. Such a positive attitude towards their own ethnicity will maintain a strong sense of self-confidence, self-esteem among the refugees in coping with problems and minimizing trouble adjusting.
2. The traditional strengths within Vietnamese community, e.g., the extended families, the elderly, personal coping systems, religious beliefs, mutual help, self-help groups, and kinship systems represent the rich resources of natural support systems. The utilization of these systems in the realities of the American scene is suggested in the intervention designed for the Southeast Asian refugees.

3. The family is a central unit of the Vietnamese. The value of family responsibility is more important to Vietnamese than the individualism that some American workers promote; thus, stressing independence and individualism to a refugee may be counterproductive. Removing any family member out of his/her home must be a measure of last resort because, once a family member is removed out of home under the enforcement of law that will become a disgrace, a “loss of face” to the whole family. Consistent with this trend, whenever feasible, the service provider should strive to retain the Vietnamese clients in their homes by patiently working with related members to help them resolve the problems without violence in the effort to rehabilitate and strengthen the family.

4. In the field of child and family, the social worker must be acutely aware of cross-cultural differences to avoid the possibility of violation of the clients’ traditional beliefs and values. A practical suggestion is that the service provider should have enough information about the culture to facilitate interaction that is respectful of the client’s sense of propriety in interpersonal relationships.

5. Time-limited and work-oriented professional behavior of the Western practitioner may not be appreciated by Vietnamese refugees. Too early a focus on the personal inner world is very likely interpreted as curiosity or official investigation. From this perspective providers should diplomatically create a friendly setting for refugees to disclose their problems, not confront or intensely interrogate them. Once reciprocal conversation is

established, the refugee clients become cooperative in the helping process.

6. Many refugees have been made to feel that seeking help from those other than their own or natural support systems is inferior. This assumption has caused the defensive, withdrawal, impassive attitude of refugees in the presence of the providers. In direct practice with the refugee clients, we suggest that the practitioner should emphasize the client's strengths and coping skills, provide opportunities for the clients to identify their problems, and discuss their coping styles in connection with their experiences.

Minimizing the risk of mental health problem

The concept of mental health in Western psychology system is unfamiliar to that of Vietnamese. In the Vietnamese pathological tradition, mental health is often revealed as a negative attribute rather than a condition that every people, from any culture or background, are in need of heeding attention to daily life. Since considering mental health symptom as a sign of evil invasion of mentality or an indication of personal craziness, the Vietnamese rarely seek care for mental health problems, but rather for physical vague symptoms that seem related to those problems.

The findings show that more than 85 percent of respondents who are ex-detainees in re-education camps have problems of mental health or PTSD at different levels ranging from mild to serious, but less

than 5 percent of them have ever sought help from the mainstream mental health services.

The under utilization of social and mental health services at an alarming level has raised the major concerns about what need to be done to help targeted mental health patients in the Vietnamese refugee community get professional, appropriate treatment in a timely manner.

It is strongly suggested that:

1. Cultural orientation is the most important primary step to educate the new coming refugees in this country. By means of community activities, organizations, clubs, booklets, ESL classes and articles published in Vietnamese commercial magazines, mental health issues be presented to the public, especially to the Vietnamese refugees.
2. Western mental health professionals and services often have inadequate understanding of the Vietnamese refugees' background, beliefs, practices, traditions, and perspective regarding mental health. An understanding of the critical significance of culture and ethnicity is essential to all clinical work. Traditional psychiatric approaches such as individually internal analysis or supportive psychotherapy with psychoactive medication have had very limited effectiveness on the Vietnamese mental health patients. The impact of the Vietnam War on the mind and heart of the patients is so profound that needs the wounds to be healed before providing psychotherapeutic treatment. In order to help

patients heal the wounds of war, the service provider should give special attention to the historical background and social circumstance of each individual or a particular group. Identifying client's past traumatic situation that leads to know the presenting problem is essential step to gain trust and establish reciprocal conversation prior to main sessions.

3. Misunderstandings may occur due to cultural/language differences between the client and the provider. In the field of mental health and psychotherapy, the Vietnamese language does not have enough equivalent terms for mental health symptoms and diagnosis. The mental health practitioner, if not a bilingual, bicultural one, should be aware of using professional translator/interpreter to minimize misinterpretation.

4. The Vietnamese traditionally served their mental health needs through the family, community and traditional indigenous healer. In America, they are reluctant to use Western mental health facilities, and may have significantly different expectations about types of help and treatment (Moon & Tashima, 1982). The mental health service provider needs to make Vietnamese client feel that seeking help from those other than their own or natural support system is not inferior. In helping neutralize inferiority complex that causes the defensive, withdrawn, impassive

reaction from clients, the provider should not take Western mental health treatment methods for granted. Rather, along with standard mental health treatments, including assessment, counseling and medications, Vietnamese healing methods should be respected and utilized as needed.

A brief word should be said about health, human, and social services in providing for Vietnamese refugees. By and large, Vietnamese are not demanding people, especially when they are in the care of the others. Even so, throughout the last couples of decades many great efforts have gained limited success because the general Western techniques of intervention applied by front line service providers proved to be less appropriate and less effective to Vietnamese refugees in need of service. To maximize the overall effectiveness of America's social programs designed for refugees, the service providers involved in refugee programs must grasp at least the basic knowledge of the client's background, value system, essential needs, and expectations.

More than two decades have passed since the fall of South Vietnam, the length of time is as long as the history of Vietnamese Refugees in America. The general configuration of the Vietnamese refugee population is in process of changing.

Materially, as a hard-working and adaptable people many of Vietnamese refugees have attained relatively high levels of employment and income. Spiritually, by contrast, the negative impact of Vietnam War and its aftermath has left fresh scars in their hearts and in their minds. This can be visualized in the numerous individual, family, and group problems identified in this study. There are linkages

among the social problems: each of them is often the result of the antecedent event and cause of the next. Of those, stability of identity, sound mind, and proper functioning of family are decisive internal strengths which strongly support the refugees ability to adjust and to succeed in America.

This study, hopefully, is an additional contribution to provide a better understanding in getting to know the Vietnamese refugees in America and their problems. From this human and social perspective, both service providers and refugee clients will develop a mutual understanding and establish a supportive helping process to solve the problems.

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LETTER TO THE RESPONDENT OF SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

TO ALL PARTICIPANTS:

The attached questionnaire is designed to gather data about the impact of the Vietnam War and its aftermath on the adjustment of Vietnamese refugees in the United States. This data can contribute a better understanding to our current knowledge about the Vietnamese refugee population in this society.

Participants will be asked to complete several questionnaires that address these issues. The questionnaires should take about half an hour to one hour to complete. No risk or discomfort anticipated. However, if you experience any distress or anxiety, you may discontinue from the process of study at any time.

Your completing questionnaire with care is determinant for the success of this survey.

Your answers are confidential. Do not place your name anywhere on the questionnaire.

Thank you for your participation and cooperation.

Sincerely,
TRAN, KIEM DOAN

My telephone number: (916) 419-0778

Email: Trankiemdoan@yahoo.com

PART I. IDENTIFYING DATA

Please circle the appropriate number

1. Sex

1. Male
2. Female

2. Age

1. Under 18
2. 19-29
3. 30-45
4. 46-59
5. 50 and over

3. Marital status

1. Single
2. Married
3. Separated / Divorced
4. Widowed
5. Spouse left behind in Vietnam
6. Divorce and remarried

4. Size of household

1. 1-2
2. 3-4
3. 5-8
4. 8-10
5. 11 or more

5. Religion

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1. Ancestral worship
2. Buddhism
3. Catholicism
4. Christian
5. None or others (specify) _____

6. Highest level of education in Vietnam

1. None but literate
2. None but illiterate
3. Elementary (1-5 years)
4. Junior High (6-9)
5. Senior High (10-12)
6. College or higher

7. Highest level of education in the U.S.

1. None
2. ESL program
3. Vocational training
4. 1-2 year of college
5. 4 year college or higher

8. Occupation in Vietnam

1. Unemployed
2. Self-employed
3. Laborer (fishing-farming)
4. Soldier
5. Public servant
6. Others (specify) _____

9. Occupation in the U.S.

1. Unemployed
2. Self-employed
3. Student

4. Laborer
5. Professional (doctor, lawyer, engineer)
6. Others (specify) _____

10. Source of income
 1. Working
 2. AFDC
 3. SSI
 4. GA (General Assistance)
 5. Unemployed insurance
 6. Others (specify) _____

11. Length of residency in the U.S
 1. Less than 18 months
 2. 19 months to 3 years
 3. 4 - 6 years
 4. 7 - 10 years
 5. More than 10 years

12. How fluent is your English?
 1. None
 2. Limited
 3. Fair
 4. Good
 5. Proficient (good in writing, reading, and speaking)

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PART II. IDENTIFYING PROBLEM

Section A: GENERAL PROBLEM

Please circle the appropriate number

1. What is your immigration status?
 1. "75" refugee (Escaped Vietnam around 4-30-1975)
 2. Boat people (Escaped Vietnam by boat)
 3. ODP (Orderly Departure Program)
 4. H.O. (Humanitarian Operation)
 5. Other (specify) _____

2. What area did you live in Vietnam?
 1. Peaceful urban
 2. Peaceful rural
 3. On the edge of the battle field
 4. Fighting related urban
 5. Fighting related rural

3. How many times were you relocated in Vietnam because of war?
 1. None
 2. One
 3. Two
 4. Three
 5. Four or more

4. How much did you expose to the war?
(Circle as many as applicable to you)

1. Front line combatant
2. Commander of fighting unit
3. Went on combat patrols
4. Attended to casualties
5. Trapped in fighting area
6. Home and belongings was damaged and destroyed
7. About to be killed
8. Wounded in the battlefield
9. Wounded in the fighting related situation
10. Captured by enemy
11. Saw killed and wounded victims
12. Evacuated from fighting zone in panic
13. Witness loved one(s) wounded or killed
14. Stayed in war refugee camps
15. Repeated evacuations and relocation

5. What were your reasons for escaping from Vietnam?

1. Panic
2. Fear of fighting
3. Fear of communist reprisal
4. To build a better life for the future
5. Others (specify) _____

6. How much did you experience life in the post-war Vietnam? (Circle as many as applicable to you)

1. Forced hard labor
2. Must accepted humiliated works to survive
3. Unemployment
4. Detained in labor camps
5. Forced to resettle in new economic zones
6. Forced relocation

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7. Brainwashed
8. Physical tortures
9. Emotional/Psychological tortures
10. Living as political outcasts and suspects
11. Isolated from significant others
12. Permanent shortage of foods
13. Serious threats
14. Family break up
15. Marital break up

7. What problems have you faced since your arrival in the U.S.? (Circle as many as applicable).

1. Language barrier
2. Unemployment
3. Underemployed
4. Cultural differences
5. Lifestyle mismatch
6. Discrimination
7. Environmental conflict
8. Family conflict
9. Confused about your own identity

8. How at ease do you feel with the American culture?

1. Not at all
2. Little
3. Moderate
4. Much
5. Very Much

9. How different do you feel the Vietnamese culture is from the American culture?

1. Not at all

2. Little
 3. Moderate
 4. Much
 5. Very Much
10. In America, you often identify yourself as
1. A Vietnamese refugee
 2. An alien
 3. A Vietnamese American
 4. An American
 5. An identity-confused person
11. Had you ever wondered: “ Who am I?” When you were still living in Vietnam?
1. Never
 2. Rarely
 3. Sometimes
 4. Very often
 5. Only in some special circumstances (specify)
-
12. Was there any change in your family since your arrival in America?
1. None
 2. Very little
 3. Moderate
 4. Much
 5. Very Much
13. As compared to your family in Vietnam, how do you think about your family in America functioning?
1. Better
 2. About the same
 3. Worse

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4. Just different

5. Other (specify) _____

14. Between your expectation and your family function in the US, how do you feel?

1. Very satisfied

2. Satisfied

3. Acceptable

4. Dissatisfied

5. Suffering

15. What kind of family problems did you have during the last 12 months? (Circle as many as applicable).

1. Change in family roles

2. Parent-child conflict

3. Wife-husband conflict

4. Divorce / Separation

5. Lack of understanding among family members

6. Lack of family communication

7. Children Disrespect family rules

8. Children run away

9. Rebellious children

10. Child abuse

11. Spousal abuse

12. Family members take side against each other

13. Financial crisis situation

14. Others (Specify) _____

16. What kind of personal problems did you have during the last 12 months? (Circle as many as applicable to you)

1. Upset
2. Loneliness
3. Helplessness
4. Sleeplessness
5. Hatred
6. Loss of memory
7. Loss of interest (in things that used to be important to you)
8. Loss of temper more at times
9. Nightmare about the war
10. Overreaction to war-reminded noise, movement, picture, and the like.

If you circle three or more questions, you may be suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or other trauma-related problems, go to section B.

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**Section B: POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER
ASSESSMENT**

DSM-IV Criteria for PTSD, Watson's Questionnaire
(Circle as many as applicable to you)

- 1 – B.1 Upsetting memories of the war frequently pushed themselves into my mind at times.
- 2 – B.2 I have had recurring unpleasant dreams about the war.
- 3 – B.3 Sometimes I acted or felt as if the war was happening again.
- 4 – B.4 Any thing that remind me of the war sometimes upset me a great deal
- 5 – C.1 I avoided thinking about the war
- 6 – C.2 Sometimes I avoided activities or situations that minded me of the war.
- 7 – C.3 Sometimes I couldn't remember important things about the war.
- 8 – C.4 I have lost a lot of interest in things that were very important to me before the war.
- 9 – C.5 I have felt more cut off emotionally from other people at some period than before.
- 10 – C.6 There have been times I felt that I did not express
my emotions as much or as freely as I did.
- 11 – C.7 There have been periods I felt that I won't have much of a future – that I may not have a rewarding career, a happy family, or a long, good life.
- 12 – D.1 I had more difficulty falling as sleep or staying as sleep at times.
- 13 – D.2 I have got irritated or lost my temper more at times.

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14 – D.3 There were periods I had more trouble concentrating.

15 – D.4 There were times I was more overtly alert, watchful, or super-aware of menacing noises than before.

Section C: EXPERIENCE AND ADJUSTMENT

For each of the statement below, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by circling the number that is applicable to you:

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral (Neither agree nor disagree)
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

1. There is a strong link between English speaking skills and advantage of getting a better job in the U.S.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

2. People with better education in Vietnam are more likely to perform better in American school.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

3. People with more urban experience are less likely to be confused by fast moving life style in America.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

4. Parental educational background deeply influences their ability to offer guidance to their children in the new land.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

5. People living in poverty in Vietnam are the more disadvantaged ones in America because they have hard time to adjust into a material oriented society.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

6. The long-term behavioral and emotional effects of socioeconomic disadvantage in Vietnam can contribute to adjustment problems in this society.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

7. Less affluent, less educated, less English-proficient people tend to stay away from the mainstream and eventually become self-isolated.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

8. Family socioeconomic class is one of the best predictors of school failure and dropping out.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

9. Vietnamese refugees of “75” immigration status are the most successful ones because they have high socioeconomic backgrounds and better formal education prior to resettlement in the U.S.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

10. Among the Vietnamese refugees in America, the former farmers and fishermen are those who have suffered

the most when being suddenly dropped down in modern-day America.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

11. Young Vietnamese people who commit to gangs in the U.S are in the middle of an identity crisis, unable to identify who they are.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

12. Although many years after the war has been over, many war victims continue to be haunted by the terror by their exposure to the war.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

13. For many Vietnamese, in the mainland and in foreign countries alike, the pain of the Vietnam War will never end.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

14. There is a significant relationship between memories of the war and problems of adjustment in the host country.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

15. The more you exposed to the war, the higher risk of mental health you may face in long-term effects.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

16. In many years following their release from re-education camps, most ex-detainees continue to be subjected to stresses, post-traumatic stress disorder, and dysfunctional family life.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

17. For Vietnamese escapees, the journey to freedom was no less a nightmare: at least half were captured by patrols or died on the way, drowned at sea or attacked by pirates.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

18. Adjusting to life in the U.S was harder than the journey from Vietnam and the months spent in camps.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly agree) (Strongly disagree)

PART III. STRESS AND COPING

Please circle the appropriate number.

1. How did you leave Vietnam?
 1. By airplane
 2. By car
 3. By boat
 4. By walking
 5. By whatever means available

2. What happened on your way of escaping?
 1. None
 2. Communist arrest
 3. Storm
 4. Pirate attack
 5. Other (Specify) _____

3. How long did you stay in Refugee camp? (Circle as many as applicable to you. If your immigration status was either O.D.P. or H.O., skip questions 3, 4, and 5. Go to the question 6)
 1. 1-20 days
 2. 1-4 months
 3. 5-11 months
 4. 1-2 years
 5. 3 years and over

4. What were your general feelings in refugee camps? (Circle as many as applicable to you)
 1. Anxiety
 2. Fear
 3. Frustration
 4. Anger

5. Grief
6. Helplessness
7. Despair
8. Guilt
9. Nostalgia
10. Other (Specify) _____

5. What are your most common descriptions of refugee camps? (Circle as many as applicable to you)

1. From hell to hotels
2. From hotels to hell
3. Host hostility
4. Host friendliness
5. Overcrowding
6. Limited, restricted area
7. Isolation
8. Being controlled
9. Dependency
10. Other (Specify) _____

6. What were your general feelings in re-education camps? (Circle as many as applicable to you)

1. Vulnerability
2. Fear
3. Frustration
4. Anger
5. Grief
6. Restlessness
7. Despair
8. Guilt
9. Suicide
10. Other (Specify) _____

7. What are your most common descriptions of re-education camps? (Circle as many as applicable to you)

1. Educational situation
2. Revengeful situation
3. Fair treatment
4. Inhumane treatment
5. Solitary confinement
6. Physical torture
7. Mental torture
8. Nightmarish environment
9. Perpetual terror
10. Other

(Specify): _____

8. What shocked you most by the first time of your arrival in the U.S?

1. None
2. American lifestyle
3. Fast moving way of living
4. Great dimension of cities
5. Other (specify) _____

9. How do you find yourself in America?

1. Very happy
2. Happy
3. Acceptable
4. Disappointed
5. Suffering

10. What should you do with those who publicly look down on you because of you ethnic identity?

1. Ignore

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2. Find the cause and remove it
3. Scold them
4. Hit them
5. Make friend with them

11. What should be done with a neighbor who repeatedly shows discrimination against you ?

1. Ignore
2. To be friendly with him
3. Stay away from him
4. Look for the help of police
5. Confront him
6. Hit him
7. Move into another location

12. What should be done for a man or a woman who is unfaithful to his/her spouse?

1. Ignore
2. Find the cause and remove it
3. Forgive and love him/her more
4. Educate or advise him/her
5. Scold him/her
6. Turn him/her out of home
7. Beat him/her

13. If your child strikes or insults you, what do you do with him/her?

1. Ignore
2. Find the cause and remove it
3. Love him more
4. Educate or advise him
5. Scold him
6. Turn him out of home

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7. Beat him

14. What should be done to a child who breaks the family rules?

1. Ignore
2. Find the cause and remove it
3. Forgive and love him more
4. Educate or advise him
5. Scold him
6. Beat him
7. Turn him out of home

15. What should you do to solve the problems?

1. Nothing
2. Try to solve by yourself
3. Seeking help from family and relatives
4. Seeking help from sponsor
5. Seeking help from social service agencies
6. Seeking help from a professional
7. Other (Specify) _____

16. Have you openly discussed your difficulties with these ones? (Circle as many as applicable to you).

1. Never
2. Family
3. Friends
4. Relatives
5. Social workers
6. Strangers
7. Other (Specify) _____

BẢNG THĂM DÒ Ý KIẾN

(Phần tiếng Việt)

Thư kính gửi quý vị tham gia trong cuộc thăm dò ý kiến.

Kính thưa quý vị,

Mục đích của tập câu hỏi đính kèm là để thu thập ý kiến của quý vị về cuộc chiến tranh Việt Nam đã có tác dụng gì trên sự hội nhập của người Việt tại Mỹ. Những dữ kiện cung cấp của quý vị có thể đóng góp thêm vào sự hiểu biết hiện nay của chúng ta về người Việt tỵ nạn tại xã hội này.

Xin quý vị tham gia vào cuộc thăm dò ý kiến trả lời những câu hỏi liên quan đến vấn đề (hội nhập) này. Quý vị sẽ mất chừng nửa giờ hay một giờ đồng hồ để hoàn thành việc trả lời các câu hỏi. Theo tiên liệu thì sẽ không có sự phiền hà hay bực mình nào khi trả lời các câu hỏi. Tuy nhiên, nếu quý vị cảm thấy bị căng thẳng, phiền muộn thì quý vị có thể dừng lại bất cứ lúc nào.

Chính sự trả lời đầy đủ và cẩn thận của quý vị là yếu tố quyết định cho sự thành công của cuộc thăm dò ý kiến này.

Tất cả mọi dữ kiện mà quý vị cung cấp đều tuyệt đối được giữ kín. Xin quý vị đừng viết tên của mình vào bất cứ nơi nào trên tập câu hỏi này.

Xin cảm ơn sự tham gia hợp tác của quý vị.

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Trần Trọng,

Trần Kiên Đoàn

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PHẦN I: DỮ KIẾN VỀ LÝ LỊCH

Xin vui lòng khoanh tròn con số của câu thích hợp.

1. Giới tính

1. Nam

2. Nữ

2. Độ tuổi

1. Dưới 18

2. 19 - 29

3. 30 - 45

4. 46 - 59

5. 50 hoặc trên

3. Tình trạng hôn nhân

1. Độc thân

2. Đã lập gia đình

3. Ly thân/Ly dị

4. Góa
5. Người hôn phối ở lại Việt Nam
6. Ly dị và tái kết hôn

4. Số người trong gia đình

1 - 2

3 - 4

5 - 8

8 - 10

11 hay đông hơn

5. Tôn giáo

1. Thờ cúng tổ tiên

2. Phật giáo

3. Thiên chúa giáo

4. Tin lành

5. Không tôn giáo, hay theo tôn giáo khác (Xin ghi rõ) _____

6. Trình độ học vấn cao nhất ở Việt Nam

Không đi học nhưng biết chữ

1. Không đi học và mù chữ

2. Tiểu học

3. Trung học đệ nhất cấp

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4. Trung học đệ nhị cấp
5. Cao đẳng đại học hay cao hơn

7. Trình độ học vấn cao nhất ở Mỹ

Không đi học

Học chương trình ESL

Học nghề

1-2 năm cao đẳng đại học

4 năm đại học hay cao hơn

8. Nghề nghiệp ở Việt Nam

Thất nghiệp

Hành nghề tư nhân

Lao động (làm ruộng, đánh cá)

Ở trong quân đội

Công chức

Nghề _____ khác _____ (xin ghi rõ)

9. Nghề nghiệp ở Mỹ

Thất nghiệp

Hành nghề tư nhân

Đi học

Lao động

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Nghề chuyên môn (Bác sĩ, luật sư, kỹ sư)

Nghề khác (Xin ghi rõ)_____

10. Nguồn thu nhập

Đi làm

Trợ cấp con nhỏ

Trợ cấp tàn tật

Trợ cấp tạm thời

Bảo hiểm thất nghiệp

Nghề khác (Xin ghi rõ)_____

11. Cư trú tại Mỹ bao lâu?

Dưới 18 tháng

19 tháng đến 3 năm

4 đến 6 năm

4 đến 10 năm

Trên 10 năm

12. Khả năng tiếng Anh thế nào?

Không biết gì cả

Chút ít

Tạm được

Giỏi

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Lưu loát (Viết, đọc và nói giỏi)

PHẦN II: NHẬN DIỆN VẤN ĐỀ

Khoản A: Vấn đề tổng quát

Xin vui lòng khoanh tròn số thích hợp

Tình trạng di dân của bạn như thế nào?

Thuộc thành phần tỵ nạn 75

Thuyền nhân

Thân nhân bảo lãnh theo diện ODP

H.O

Thuộc diện khác (Xin ghi rõ) _____

Quý vị ở vùng nào tại Việt Nam?

Vùng thành phố không có chiến tranh

Vùng thôn quê không có chiến tranh

Vùng sát nách với nơi giao chiến

Vùng thành phố ảnh hưởng chiến tranh.

Vùng nông thôn ảnh hưởng chiến tranh.

Quý vị đã dời chỗ ở bao nhiêu lần vì chiến tranh Việt Nam?

Không hề dời chỗ ở

Một lần

Hai lần

Ba lần

Bốn lần hay nhiều hơn

4. Quý vị đã đối mặt với chiến tranh tới mức nào? (Xin chọn tất cả các câu trả lời thích ứng với quý vị)

- 1. Lính chiến đấu**
- 2. Đơn vị trưởng lính chiến đấu**
- 3. Tuần tra mặt trận**
- 4. Chăm sóc kẻ thương vong**
- 5. Bị kẹt trong vùng giao tranh**
- 6. Nhà cửa và tài sản bị tiêu hủy**
- 7. Suýt bị giết**
- 8. Bị thương ngoài mặt trận**
- 9. Bị thương trong vùng nặng ảnh hưởng giao tranh**
- 10. Bị địch bắt**
- 11. Chứng kiến cảnh nạn nhân bị bắn giết**
- 12. Tản cư ra khỏi vùng giao tranh trong hoảng hốt**
- 13. Chứng kiến cảnh thân nhân bị bắn giết**

14. Phải ở trong trại tỵ nạn chiến tranh
15. Phải tản cư và di chuyển chỗ ở nhiều lần

Quý vị trốn thoát ra khỏi Việt Nam vì những lý do nào?

1. Hoảng sợ
2. Sợ đánh nhau
3. Sợ cộng sản trả thù
4. Tìm nơi xây dựng cuộc sống tốt đẹp hơn cho tương lai.
5. Lý do khác (Xin ghi rõ) _____

6. Quý vị đã trải qua cuộc sống thời hậu chiến Việt Nam như thế nào?

(Xin chọn tất cả các câu thích hợp với hoàn cảnh quý vị)

1. Cường bức lao động
2. Phải chấp nhận làm những nghề thấp kém để sống
3. Thất nghiệp
4. Bị tù trong trại cải tạo
5. Bị đẩy đi vùng kinh tế mới
6. Cường bức di dân
7. Tẩy não
8. Hành hạ xác thịt
9. Hành hạ tình cảm và tâm lý

10. **Sống như kẻ tình nghi tội phạm chính trị**
11. **Bị cô lập với người thân**
12. **Thường xuyên đói khát**
13. **Bị đe dọa nghiêm trọng**
14. **Gia đình ly tán**
15. **Vợ chồng đổ vỡ**

7. Quý vị đã đối diện với những vấn đề nào kể từ khi qua Mỹ?

(Xin chọn tất cả các câu thích hợp)

1. **Trở ngại ngôn ngữ**
2. **Thất nghiệp**
3. **Việc làm dưới khả năng**
4. **Sự khác biệt về văn hóa**
5. **Lối sống không phù hợp**
6. **Kỳ thị**
7. **Sự xung đột với môi trường xung quanh**
8. **Sự xung đột trong gia đình**
9. **Bị rối loạn về lai lịch của mình**

8. Quý vị có cảm thấy thoải mái, dễ dàng với nền văn hóa Mỹ hay không?

1. **Hoàn toàn không**
2. **Chút ít**

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3. Trung bình
4. Nhiều
5. Nhiều lắm

9. Quý vị có cảm thấy Văn Hóa Việt Nam khác với văn hóa Mỹ không?

1. Hoàn toàn không
2. Chút ít
3. Trung bình
4. Nhiều
5. Nhiều lắm

10. Ở Mỹ quý vị thường nhận diện chính mình như là:

1. Một người Việt Nam tỵ nạn
2. Một người lạ
3. Một người Mỹ gốc Việt
4. Một người Mỹ
5. Một người bị rối rắm lai lịch không biết mình là ai

11. Có bao giờ quý vị tự hỏi □Ta là ai?□ Khi quý vị còn đang sống ở Việt Nam không?

1. Không bao giờ
2. Hiếm khi

3. Đôi khi
4. Thường xuyên
5. Chỉ trong những hoàn cảnh đặc biệt (Xin ghi rõ) _____

12. Kể từ ngày qua Mỹ, có gì thay đổi trong gia đình của quý vị không?

1. Không có gì thay đổi
2. Thay đổi rất ít
3. Thay đổi ở mức độ trung bình
4. Thay đổi nhiều
5. Thay đổi nhiều lắm

13. So với gia đình ở Việt Nam, quý vị nghĩ thế nào về chức năng hoạt động của gia đình quý vị tại Mỹ?

1. Tốt hơn
 2. Cũng giống nhau
 3. Tệ hơn
 4. Khác hẳn
 5. Ý kiến khác (Xin ghi rõ)
-

14. Giữa điều quý vị mong muốn và thực tế diễn ra của gia đình mình tại Mỹ, Quý vị cảm thấy thế nào?

1. Rất hài lòng

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2. **Hài lòng**
3. **Tạm được**
4. **Không hài lòng**
5. **Chịu đựng một cách khổ sở**

15. **Quý vị đã gặp phải những vấn đề gia đình nào trong năm qua? (Xin chọn tất cả các câu thích hợp)**

1. **Sự thay đổi các vai vế trong gia đình**
 2. **Xung đột giữa cha mẹ và con cái**
 3. **Xung đột giữa vợ chồng**
 4. **Ly dị/Ly thân**
 5. **Thiếu sự hiểu biết nhau giữa các thành viên trong gia đình**
 6. **Thiếu sự chuyển trò chia sẻ trong gia đình**
 7. **Con cái không tôn trọng lễ luật của gia đình**
 8. **Con cái bỏ nhà đi hoang**
 9. **Con cái nổi loạn**
 10. **Hành hạ trẻ em**
 11. **Hành hạ người hôn phối**
 12. **Người trong nhà chia phe chống nhau**
 13. **Bị lâm vào cảnh khủng hoảng tài chánh**
 14. **Vấn đề khác (Xin ghi rõ)**
-

16. Quý vị đã có những vấn đề cá nhân nào trong năm qua? (Xin chọn tất cả các câu thích hợp)

1. **Buồn bực**
2. **Cô đơn**
3. **Tuyệt vọng**
4. **Mất ngủ**
5. **Căm thù**
6. **Mất trí nhớ**
7. **Mất sự ham thích (Với những điều thích thú trước kia)**
8. **Nóng giận nhiều hơn trước**
9. **Bị ác mộng về chiến tranh**
10. **Phản ứng quá khích đối với tiếng ồn, động tác di chuyển, hình ảnh, và những điều tương tự nhắc nhở đến chiến tranh.**

Nếu quý vị khoanh từ 3 câu hay nhiều hơn, quý vị rất có thể đang bị mắc □ chứng xáo trộn tâm thần hậu chấn thương □ (PTSD) hay những vấn đề liên quan đến hậu chấn thương, xin vui lòng tiếp tục trả lời phần B.

Khoản B: Lượng định chứng Xáo Trộn Tâm Thần Hậu Chấn Thương

Theo DSM-IV Các tiêu chuẩn của PTSD; câu hỏi của Watson.

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1 - B.1 Những hoài niệm đau buồn về chiến tranh thường xuyên chiếm lấy trí óc tôi lúc này hay lúc nọ.

2 - B.2 Những giấc mơ khôn khổ về chiến tranh cứ tái diễn đối với tôi

3 - B.3 Đôi khi tôi hành động và cảm thấy như thể là chiến tranh đang xảy ra lại

4 - B.4 Bất cứ điều nhắc nhở đến chiến tranh đều làm cho tôi bị buồn bực rất nhiều

5 - C.1 Tôi tránh nghĩ về chiến tranh

6 - C.2 Nhiều lúc tôi tránh những hoạt động hay những tình huống nhắc nhở tôi về chiến tranh.

7 - C.3 Đôi khi tôi không thể nhớ được những sự việc quan trọng trong cuộc chiến

8 - C.4 Tôi đã mất sự quan tâm về những điều mà trước cuộc chiến tôi cho là hết sức quan trọng.

9 - C.5 Tôi cảm thấy sự cắt đứt tình cảm của mình với những người khác nhiều hơn trước đây.

10 - C.6 Có nhiều lần tôi cảm thấy rằng tôi đã không diễn tả những cảm xúc của mình tràn trề và thoải mái như tôi đã từng làm

11 - C.7 Có những khoảng thời gian tôi cảm thấy tương lai mình kẹt lồi - ví như có thể tôi sẽ không có công việc làm giá trị, không có một gia đình hạnh phúc, hay một cuộc sống tốt đẹp, trường thọ.

12 - D.1 Có những lúc tôi đã không nằm ngủ dễ dàng hay hay không buồn ngủ gì cả.

13 - D.2 Tôi hay bực tức và nổi nóng dễ dàng hơn trước đây.

14 - D.3 Đã có những giai đoạn tôi bị mất tập trung, chú ý.

15 - D.4 So với trước đây, đã có những lúc tôi tỏ ra cảnh giác, canh chừng quá đáng, hoặc là dè chừng tối đa về những tiếng ồn có vẻ đe dọa hay những nhân tố kích thích.

Khoản C: Kinh Nghiệm và sự hội nhập

Mỗi câu dưới đây, xin quý vị vui lòng bày tỏ sự đồng ý hay không đồng ý bằng cách khoanh tròn con số thích ứng với quan niệm riêng của quý vị:

1: Rất đồng ý

2: Đồng ý

3: Đứng giữa (Không đồng ý mà cũng chẳng bắt đồng ý kiến)

4: Không đồng ý

5: Rất không đồng ý

1. Có sự liên quan chặt chẽ giữa khả năng nói tiếng Anh và cơ hội tìm được một việc làm tốt hơn ở Mỹ.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

2. Người có trình độ học vấn cao hơn ở Việt Nam sẽ có khả năng học tập tốt hơn ở Mỹ.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

3. Người càng có nhiều kinh nghiệm sống ở thành phố hơn sẽ càng ít bối rối hơn khi sống trong môi trường có nhịp sống quay nhanh ở Mỹ.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

4. Trình độ học vấn sẵn có của cha mẹ có ảnh hưởng sâu xa đến khả năng hướng dẫn con cái của họ trong hoàn cảnh mới.

1 2 3 4 5
(Rất đồng ý) (Rất không đồng ý)

5. Người đã sống trong hoàn cảnh nghèo đói ở Việt Nam là những người thiếu thuận lợi hơn ở Mỹ vì họ rất khó hội nhập với môi trường sống do vật chất chi phối ở Mỹ.

1 2 3 4 5
(Rất đồng ý) (Rất không đồng ý)

6. Ảnh hưởng lâu dài về thái độ và tình cảm do cuộc sống kinh tế-xã hội khó khăn tạo ra ở Việt Nam sẽ góp phần vào những vấn đề hội nhập trong xã hội này.

1 2 3 4 5
(Rất đồng ý) (Rất không đồng ý)

7. Người thiếu tài sản, kém học thức, trở ngại nói tiếng Anh có khuynh hướng tách rời tập thể xã hội chung và cuối cùng tự cô lập chính mình.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

8. Giai cấp kinh tế và xã hội của gia đình là một trong những dấu hiệu tiên đoán hay nhất sự thất bại về học vấn hay bỏ học.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

9. Người Việt Nam tỵ nạn đợt □75□ là những người tỵ nạn thành công nhất vì họ xuất thân từ giai cấp kinh tế xã hội khá giả và có trình độ học vấn cao trước khi tỵ nạn tại Hoa Kỳ.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

10. Trong số những người Việt Nam tỵ nạn tại Mỹ, những người trước đây làm nghề nông và đánh cá là những người chịu đựng nhiều nhất khi bị đột ngột thả xuống một nơi văn minh như Mỹ Quốc.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

11. Những thanh thiếu niên Việt Nam theo băng đảng tại Mỹ đang bị đứng giữa sự khủng hoảng về lai lịch, không nhận diện được mình là ai.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

12. Mặc dù đã nhiều năm đi qua sau cuộc chiến, nhiều nạn nhân chiến tranh vẫn tiếp tục bị ám ảnh bởi nỗi kinh hoàng mà họ đã hứng chịu trong chiến tranh.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

13. Đối với đa số người Việt Nam, trong cũng như ngoài nước, nỗi đau của cuộc chiến Việt Nam không bao giờ chấm dứt.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

14. Có sự liên quan chặt chẽ giữa ký ức về chiến tranh và vấn đề hội nhập vào đời sống nơi quốc gia tỵ nạn.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

15. Quý vị càng trải qua với chiến tranh nhiều và lâu chừng nào, quý vị càng có nhiều nguy cơ mắc các chứng bệnh tâm thần sau này chừng đó.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

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16. Nhiều năm sau khi được thả ra khỏi trại tù lao động cải tạo, hầu hết những người cựu tù có khả năng bị chứng suy nhược tinh thần, khủng hoảng tâm thần hậu chấn thương, và đời sống gia đình không ổn định.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

17. Đối với những người Việt Nam vượt biên trốn thoát, cuộc hành trình tìm tự do không thua gì một cơn ác mộng: Ít nhất là một nửa bị lực lượng canh phòng bắt lại hay bị thương vong trên đường đi, chết đuối dưới biển hay bị hải tặc tấn công.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

18. Điều chỉnh để hội nhập vào đời sống Mỹ còn khó hơn là cuộc hành trình trốn khỏi Việt Nam và những ngày chực chờ trong trại.

1 2 3 4 5

(Rất đồng ý)

(Rất không đồng ý)

PHẦN III. CẶNG THẲNG TINH THẦN VÀ SỰ ĐỐI PHÓ

Xin vui lòng khoanh tròn con số của câu thích hợp.

1. Quý vị rời Việt Nam bằng phương tiện gì?

1. Máy bay
2. Xe hơi
3. Ghe thuyền
4. Đi bộ
5. Bất cứ phương tiện gì có được

2. Chuyện gì đã xảy ra trên đường vượt biên?

1. Không
2. Bị cộng sản bắt
3. Gặp bão
4. Bị hải tặc tấn công
5. Biến cố khác (Xin ghi rõ) _____

2. Quý vị phải ở lại trại tỵ nạn bao lâu? (Nếu quý vị là người tỵ nạn thuộc diện ODP hay HO, xin bỏ bãng các câu 3,4, và 5 để trả lời câu 6 và phần kế tiếp)

1. 1 - 20 ngày
2. 1 - 4 tháng
3. 5 - 11 tháng
4. 1 - 2 năm
5. 3 năm và lâu hơn

4. Những cảm giác tổng quát của quý vị về trại tỵ nạn

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là gì? (Xin chọn tất cả các câu trả lời thích ứng với quý vị)

1. Buồn bực
2. Sợ hãi
3. Bối rối
4. Tức giận
5. Đau buồn
6. Tuyệt vọng
7. Thất vọng
8. Tội lỗi
9. Nhớ nhà
10. Cảm giác khác _____

5. Sự mô tả thông thường nhất của quý vị về trại tỵ nạn như thế nào? (Xin chọn tất cả các câu trả lời thích ứng với quý vị)

1. Từ địa ngục đến sung sướng
2. Từ sung sướng đến địa ngục
3. Vùng đất tạm cư đầy thù nghịch
4. Vùng đất tạm cư đầy thân thiện
5. Quá đông đảo chen chúc
6. Bị giới hạn, vùng đất bị cấm đoán
7. Cô lập
8. Bị kiểm soát chặt chẽ

9. Bị phụ thuộc

10. Những điều khác: _____

6. Những cảm giác tổng quát của quý vị về trại lao động cải tạo là gì? (Chọn những câu thích ứng với hoàn cảnh của quý vị)

1. Thấp hèn

2. Sợ hãi

3. Bối rối

4. Tức giận

5. Buồn rầu

6. Bất an

7. Thất vọng

8. Tội lỗi

9. Cảm giác khác: _____

7. Sự mô tả thông thường nhất của quý vị về trại lao động cải tạo là gì?

1. Một hoàn Muôn tự tử

2. Cảnh có tính giáo dục

3. Một môi trường để trả thù

4. Đối xử công bằng

5. Đối xử bất nhân

6. Giam giữ biệt lập

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7. **Hành hạ thể xác**
8. **Hành hạ tinh thần**
9. **Cảnh sống như cơn ác mộng**
10. **Khủng bố thường xuyên**
11. **Ý kiến khác: _____**

8. Lần đầu tiên đặt chân tới Mỹ, điều gì đã tác động quý vị mạnh mẽ nhất?

1. **Không**
2. **Kiểu sống Mỹ**
3. **Tốc độ đời sống quá nhanh**
4. **Quy mô quá lớn của những thành phố**
5. **Điều khác (Xin ghi rõ)**

9. Quý vị tự cảm thấy mình như thế nào ở Mỹ?

1. **Rất sung sướng**
2. **Sung sướng**
3. **Tạm được**
4. **Bối rối**
5. **Thất vọng**
6. **Khổ sở**

10. Quý vị sẽ làm gì đối với những người công khai khinh dễ quý vị chỉ vì nguồn gốc sắc tộc của bạn?

1. **Làm ngơ**
2. **Tìm nguyên nhân để giải quyết**
3. **Mắng nhiếc**
4. **Đánh họ**
5. **Làm bạn với họ**

11. Quý vị sẽ làm gì đối với người láng giềng tỏ ra kỳ thị chống báng quý vị?

1. **Làm ngơ**
2. **Thân tình với người ấy**
3. **Tránh xa**
4. **Nhờ cảnh sát giúp đỡ**
5. **Đương đầu với người ấy**
6. **Đánh người ấy**
7. **Di chuyển ở nơi khác**

12. Quý vị sẽ làm gì khi một người không trung thành với người hôn phối của mình?

1. **Làm ngơ**
2. **Tìm nguyên nhân để giải quyết**
3. **Tha thứ và yêu thương người ấy hơn**
4. **Giáo dục, khuyên bảo người ấy**
5. **Mắng nhiếc người ấy**
6. **Đuổi người ấy ra khỏi nhà**

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7. Đánh người ấy

13. Nếu con quý vị đánh lại hay hỗn hào với quý vị thì quý vị sẽ làm gì với nó?

- 1. Làm ngơ**
- 2. Tìm ra nguyên nhân để giải quyết**
- 3. Thương yêu nó nhiều hơn**
- 4. Giáo dục hay khuyên bảo nó**
- 5. La rầy, mắng nhiếc nó**
- 6. Đuổi nó ra khỏi nhà**
- 7. Đánh đập nó**

14. Quý vị sẽ làm gì đối với một đứa con bất chấp hay vi phạm luật lệ gia đình?

- 1. Làm lơ**
- 2. Tìm nguyên nhân để giải quyết**
- 3. Tha thứ và yêu thương nó hơn**
- 4. Giáo dục hay khuyên bảo nó**
- 5. La rầy, mắng nhiếc nó**
- 6. Đánh nó**
- 7. Đuổi nó ra khỏi nhà**

15. Quý vị sẽ phải làm gì để giải quyết vấn đề khi có sự cố xảy ra?

1. **Chẳng làm gì cả**
2. **Cố gắng tự mình giải quyết vấn đề**
3. **Tìm sự giúp đỡ của gia đình và thân nhân**
4. **Tìm sự giúp đỡ của người bảo trợ**
5. **Tìm sự giúp đỡ từ các cơ quan xã hội**
6. **Tìm sự giúp đỡ của một chuyên gia**
7. **Cách khác _____**

16. Có bao giờ bạn thảo luận thẳng thắn những vấn đề khó khăn của bạn với những người này không? (Chọn tất cả những người thích ứng với quý vị)

1. **Không bao giờ**
2. **Gia đình**
3. **Bạn bè**
4. **Thân nhân**
5. **Nhân viên xã hội**
6. **Người lạ**
7. **Người khác _____**

Phần câu hỏi thăm dò ý kiến đến đây là hết. Xin chân thành cảm ơn quý vị.

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